

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

**Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii* (1, 12, 1)**

Scilly St Mary's, first-winter, 23rd October, photo (P. J. Freestone, M. Halliday, R. Walsh *et al.*).

(Breeds from S Transbaikalia and N Mongolia to extreme NE China and S to Tibet. Winters locally throughout Indian subcontinent S to Sri Lanka.)

**Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (1, 274, 8)**

Fife Isle of May, 16th October, trapped, photo (D. A. & J. Bell, A. J. Gramauskas). Wormiston, 25th October (K. D. Shaw).

Outer Hebrides Ness, Lewis, 5th November (A. Robinson, M. S. Scott *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 25th September, photo (D. N. Shaw *et al.*); 13th October (P. A. A. Baxter); 23rd October (D. N. Shaw). Sumburgh, Mainland, 26th October to 22nd November (P. V. Harvey *et al.*).

Suffolk Thorpeness, 16th–20th October (E. W. Patrick, R. F. Tomlinson *et al.*).

2004 Scilly St Mary's, 25th October (R. A. Filby, N. Lawrence, R. A. Parkes).

(European range restricted to N Urals. Widespread across C and E Siberia to N China, Kamchatka, Kuril Islands and Japan. Winters widely across S China, Taiwan and throughout N and C parts of SE Asia. Population in Himalayas and mountains of west-central China winters throughout Indian subcontinent.)

**Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* (5, 65, 2)**

Orkney North Ronaldsay, 25th September (A. E. Duncan *et al.*).

Shetland Scatness, Mainland, 25th September, photo (P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington *et al.*).

1975 Suffolk Minsmere, 27th April (*Brit. Birds* 69: 352); no longer considered acceptable.

(Breeds within narrow region of scrub-tundra and taiga of subarctic Eurasia, from Pechora region of NE Russia across Siberia to Chukotskiy Peninsula and Kamchatka. Migrates through E China and Taiwan to wintering areas in Philippines, N Borneo and N Sulawesi. Isolated population breeds in NE China.)

**Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* (13, 412, 11)**

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, 16th–21st October (E. Bowler, A. George, S. D. Stansfield).

Dorset St Aldhelm's Head, 5th October (P. Combridge). Portland Bill, 6th October (N. Hopper, J. A. Lidster, G. Walbridge *et al.*).

Norfolk Burnham Overy, 4th October (M. A. Golley *et al.*).



Ian Butler

25. Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2005.

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

**Northumberland** Farne Islands, 5th–12th October, photo (D. Steele *et al.*).

**Scilly** St Mary's, 9th October (M. I. Hoit, P. Holness, K. Langdon); same, 12th–14th October, photo (A. Bridges *et al.*) (plate 25); 25th October (O. Campbell, P. Dolton, E. Palmer *et al.*). Tresco, 26th October (A. W. Mason, P. A. Stancliffe); same, 30th October (R. L. Flood, A. Hannington). St Agnes, 2nd November (D. Murdoch).

**Yorkshire**, East Sammy's Point, Easington, 10th September (A. J. & M. G. Stoye). Kilnsea, 11th September (J. M. Bayldon).

**2002 Devon** Dawlish Warren, 14th October (I. W. Lakin).

Described by Pallas from Siberia in 1811, the Red-throated Pipit was first confirmed in Britain in Shetland, on Fair Isle on 2nd October 1908, and the second was 'heard' there on 1st November of the same year. The third was 'seen and heard' on St Kilda, Western Isles, on 21st September 1910. A further 13 were found in the Northern and Western Isles in the period of collection and by George Waterston in his early Fair Isle days in the 1930s. The first accepted record for England did not come until one at Dungeness, Kent, on 5th September 1938.

Since a distinctive, thin, hissed, long-drawn-out and fading call has been so much stressed by BBRC as the fundament of a secure claim, we might assume that it was the note that the ancients heard. In fact, they perceived two: the modern *sine qua non* and what Bernard Tucker described as a 'full, musical, rather abrupt chiip'. Furthermore, *The Handbook* text implied that the latter note was the commoner utterance (and it was certainly given frequently by wintering birds in Kenya in the 1952/53 winter; pers. obs.). Also rendered as 'tsup' and 'stuh' by Fennoscandian ears, its rarity in the modern British discussion of pipit calls is odd.

There were no finds between 1939 and 1949 but from 1950, the bird observatories made new discoveries. By 1972, there had been 55 and autumn occurrences had become annual, making up about two-thirds of all records. By 1985, the total had grown to 163 and there were noticeable flurries in spring and autumn during the early 'three great years' for rarities, 1975 to 1977; the first produced a record 17 birds. Yet although spring overshoots became annual, gaps still showed in the autumn series, with none in 1982 and 1983. Accordingly, the seasonal divide changed, with more (43%) in spring; and the northern bias faded, with greater numbers of Scilly observers making the archipelago the *locus classicus* in autumn (34% cf. 22% on Shetland). Overall, there was no sign that the bird had become truly commoner; the new occurrence pattern was much more an artefact of increased observer effort and exploration.

Two decades on, by 2005, the modern total (since 1950) had increased to 423 with a doubling of the annual average and the spring share up to 47% (with 106 birds making May the best month of the year). The Northern Isles regained a small lead in locality shares (22%); the Scilly and southwest share slumped (from 34% to 20%). More intriguingly, there were 13 inland finds, almost doubling the total of such records. Remarkably, the former Barn Elms Reservoirs and Beddington Sewage-farm, Greater London, provided three and two birds respectively. In 1992, there was an extraordinary influx, with 34 of 47 birds dated from May to July (12 of them were in Shetland, where a male sang on Fetlar for three weeks in June). Ominously, since 2001 the bird has seemingly struggled to reach us. The recent average of seven a year represents a 60% decrease on the previous decade and is the same as that from 1950 to 1985. Astonishingly, there was no spring bird in 2005.

Within Britain, autumn birds appear to move south at a leisurely pace; the gap between the Shetland mean date (27 recent birds) of 27th September and that for Scilly (46 individuals) of 16th October is 19 days. Spring birds are seemingly more urgent in their passage, judged by an analysis of records from 1958 to 1986. Apart from nine that came early to southwest localities on a mean date of 29th April, the main contingent represented by 31 in north Norfolk appeared on a mean date of 19th May, only three days ahead of that of 22 birds in Shetland.

Vinicombe & Cottridge (1996) offered no neat explanation for the vagrancy of the Red-throated Pipit. Breeding essentially above the Arctic Circle, its nearest and stable Fennoscandian community numbers about 16,500 pairs. In common with their eastern relatives, most fly to the Tropics for the winter. Whether or not there is a migratory divide is not known but some birds from the westernmost population move due south and, before or after crossing the Mediterranean, must shift up to 30°W to winter in West Africa, including Gambia. Against this backdrop, it is likely that our autumn birds are either drifted migrants from the contingent that departs from south Sweden or fellow-travellers within

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

the hordes of sympatric Meadow Pipits *A. pratensis* that move southwest. The spring vector remains puzzling. Perhaps birds trekking north from West Africa just stay on that tack and do not turn east until they reach the North Sea.

In many European countries, the Red-throated Pipit is not regarded as a rarity, but a few have strayed to Bear Island, Iceland and the Faeroes in an extension of their regular achievement of Britain and Ireland.

The field identification of the Red-throated Pipit has attracted much debate. Well seen, adults present no problems but notoriously some unsullied first-winter birds can resemble either Pechora Pipit *A. gustavi* or Meadow Pipit. Setting a nasty trap, a few first-winter Meadows are as heavily spotted below as Red-throats, and some 'orange-breasted' spring Meadow Pipits are a further pitfall (Porter 2005). The recent (2000–04) rejection rate has been 3%.

Porter, R. 2005. 'Orange-breasted' Meadow Pipits – an identification pitfall. *Birding World* 18: 169–172.

(Breeds in Arctic Eurasia, from N Norway, Sweden and Finland E to Chukotskiy Peninsula and S to Kamchatka, with small numbers in W Alaska. Winters across N and C equatorial Africa, S China and SE Asia.)

### Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens* (1, 3, 1)

Lincolnshire Wyberton, 5th–13th December, photo (P. R. French *et al.*) (plate 26), also seen 24th–29th January 2006.

This represents only the fifth record of Buff-bellied Pipit for Britain. All four previous records have been on islands, with one on St Kilda, Western Isles, one on Fair Isle, Shetland, and two on Scilly. Remarkably, this first for the mainland was found wintering on the east coast! Vagrant birds inevitably invite careful scrutiny at a level which sometimes produces fresh insights into their identification. This was certainly the case with this individual. Paul French is to be especially commended for the bird's discovery and persevering to secure its identity even though the obvious grey nape and grey cast to the upperparts were initially viewed as anomalous and the underparts streaking rather extensive. Further

investigation indicated the features to be within normal variation for this species and the 1996 Scilly bird appears to have been somewhat similar in its upperparts plumage.

The greater coverts of the Lincolnshire bird were also instructive; with clearly defined, extensive dark centres with pointed tips and rather narrow pale fringes, these appear to be at the more obvious end of retained juvenile feathers. Adult greater coverts tend to have more



Garry Taylor

26. Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens*, Wyberton, Lincolnshire, December 2005.

diffuse, squared-off dark centres and fringes which are richer buff, and also broader, especially at the tips. Consequently, this bird can be aged as a first-winter.

The possibility of this individual belonging to the Asian subspecies of Buff-bellied Pipit *A. r. japonicus* was seriously considered, given the circumstances of this record. In winter plumage, this form typically appears quite different in a number of ways from *rubescens*; however, some can overlap in some characters, particularly those which undergo a partial pre-breeding moult early in the New Year, and the plumage of these two forms becomes progressively more similar. Subtle features such as the browner underparts streaking, duller and buffer fringes to coverts and dark legs all indicate *rubescens* for the Lincolnshire bird.

The occurrence of this, and another Buff-bellied Pipit earlier in the autumn in Halsingland, Sweden, suggests the possibility that at least some Buff-bellied Pipits may come 'over the top' from

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

Greenland/northeast Canada, perhaps with migrating Meadow Pipits *A. pratensis* from east Greenland and Iceland, to end up in western Europe in autumn and winter. With an increasing number of records in Iceland in recent years, perhaps optimistic birders should look for more Buff-bellied Pipits anywhere with suitable habitat where Meadow Pipits pass through and might winter. Learning to listen for that (with practice) rather distinctive double 'pip-it' call may help in locating more of what is surely an overlooked vagrant and a true 'birder's bird'.

(Breeds W Greenland, N and NW Canada, and Alaska. Winters W and S USA, Mexico and C America. Asian race *japonicus* vagrant to W Palearctic, breeds NE Siberia W to Baikal region; winters N Pakistan and NW India to S and E China, S Korea and S Japan.)

### Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

#### SE European and W Asian race *M. f. feldegg*, 'Black-headed Wagtail' (0, 11, 1)

Devon West Charleton Marsh, Kingsbridge Estuary, ♂, 8th–18th June, photo (A. Williams *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 281); same, South Huish, 8th July to 2nd September, photo (A. J. Livett *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 99: plate 351).

2003 Scilly St Mary's, first-summer ♂, 6th May (E. A. Fisher, R. L. Flood *et al.*).

2004 Lincolnshire Holbeach Marsh, ♂, 4th June (J. J. Gilroy).

These records represent a significant upturn in the occurrence of this form, constituting 25% of the total number ever recorded. The number of accepted records dropped in the mid 1990s following a protracted review after the publication of van den Berg & Oreel (1985), a paper which highlighted the potential pitfall of very dark-headed *M. f. thunbergi* and led to a requirement for breeding-plumage males to show a jet-black hood to enable acceptance. The Scilly record above has shown that this is not an absolute requirement, as it is not necessarily a feature of first-summer or early spring males. One critical feature of both the Scilly and the Devon birds was the presence of green feathering in the nape; this is not a characteristic of *thunbergi*, in which dark-headed males will always retain bluish-grey tones in the nape, but is a key feature of fresh *feldegg*. To ensure acceptance, it remains critical that individuals do not show evidence of features that may indicate intergradation with another form. The photographed bird in Lincolnshire, although observed only briefly, did not appear to show any features at variance with pure *feldegg*. The Devon bird now holds the record of the longest-staying individual in the UK, bringing to mind the bird that spent over a month in Oxfordshire in 1988.

van den Berg, M., & Oreel, G. J. 1985. Field identification of black-headed Yellow Wagtails in Western Europe. *Brit Birds* 78: 176–183.

(Breeds Balkans and Greece E through Turkey to E Kazakhstan and Afghanistan, and S to Iran. Western populations winter Nigeria to Uganda and S to Congo, eastern populations winter NW India.)

### Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (0, 174, 4)

Norfolk Cley, first-winter, 22nd August, photo (P. R. Colston *et al.*).

Northumberland Alnmouth, first-winter, 10th–11th September, photo (S. J. McElwee, J. G. Steele, A. Tilmouth *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 401).

Scilly Bryher, ♂, 30th April, photo (P. Davies, D. B. Rosair *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 29th April to 2nd May, photo (D. N. Shaw, M. D. Warren *et al.*).

1990 Kent Sandwich Bay, 8th–10th May, photo (K. B. Ellis, N. J. Hallam, S. Pearce *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 91: 517); previously found unacceptable, now accepted after review.

(Nominate race breeds in N Russia, from E Kola and Kanin Peninsula across N Siberia to Taimyr Peninsula and S to C Siberia. To south, range expanded W during 20th century; small numbers now breed regularly in Belarus, Baltic countries and occasionally S Finland; otherwise from Ukraine and S Russia, E across Kazakhstan and Mongolia to N China. Black-backed race *calcarata* breeds S Central Asia to Tibetan Plateau. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent, S China and SE Asia to peninsular Thailand.)

### Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (1, 155, 3)

Norfolk Holme, first-winter ♂, 7th October, trapped, photo (J. Andrews, S. Barker, A. Powell *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, 5th–6th September, photo (R. J. Butcher *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 350). Norwick, Unst, 6th September (M. G. Pennington).

2004 Shetland Sumburgh Head, Mainland, 25th August (S. E. Duffield, P. M. Ellis, H. Moncrieff *et al.*).

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

(Widespread throughout E Europe with dramatic population increase in 20th century. Range still expanding NW into W Norway, and locally abundant in S Scandinavia and Baltic countries. C European range from Denmark SE to Romania and Ukraine, and through temperate European Russia to S Siberia. Winters E Africa, from S Kenya to Zimbabwe.)

### Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope* (0, 4, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter ♀, 23rd–27th October, trapped, photo (M. Culshaw, E. Douglas *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 99: plate 24; plate 27).

This is the fifth record for Britain and the third for the magic isle. All have arrived in a 16-day period from 9th to 25th October and, apart from one in Dorset on 19th October 1997, all have been in Shetland. A report of an immature male on the MSV *Fennica* about 175 km east of Aberdeen on 12th



Rebecca Nason

27. First-winter female Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*, Fair Isle, Shetland, October 2005.

October has not yet been submitted. It is worth reiterating that records at sea within the UK Economic Exclusion Zone of 200 nautical miles (370 km) or the midpoint between the UK and any neighbouring country (if shorter) are considered by BBRC (*Brit. Birds* 85: 332).

(Breeds throughout Siberia from Ob River E to Anadyr and Kamchatka, with small numbers to European foothills of Urals in W. S limit reaches N Mongolia, Ussuriland, NE Hokkaido and NE China, with isolated population on E slopes of Tibetan Plateau. Winters from Nepal E through Himalayan foothills to NE India, Burma and N Indochina to C Thailand, S China and Taiwan.)

### Rufous-tailed Robin *Luscinia sibilans* (0, 1, 0)

2004 Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, 23rd October, trapped, photo (D. N. Shaw, M. Wood *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 97: plate 390; 99: plates 111–114).

This was the first record for the Western Palearctic and surely one of the highlights of 2004. Unfortunately, it was enjoyed by just 20 or so observers, and had departed by the following morning. This species shares a similar range and migratory route with its close congener the Siberian Blue Robin *L. cyane*, breeding as far west as the lower Yenisey valley and wintering in southern China and south-east Asia, so its occurrence here was not altogether unexpected. It arrived just one week after another spectacular, if completely unpredicted, eastern vagrant – a Chestnut-eared Bunting *Emberiza fucata*, which was recently accepted onto Category A of the British List by BOURC – what a fantastic double for Fair Isle (Shaw in press)! It is interesting to speculate why northwest Europe has received a flurry of extreme far-eastern vagrants in recent years. In addition to these two, there have been several Siberian Rubythroats *L. calliope*, Siberian Blue Robins and Thick-billed Warblers *Acrocephalus aedon*, and two Eastern Crowned Warblers *Phylloscopus coronatus*. And of course, the second European record of Rufous-tailed Robin occurred just over a year later, in Poland (Shaw 2006). Whatever the reason, long may it continue!

Shaw, D. N. 2006. Rufous-tailed Robin on Fair Isle: new to Britain. *Brit. Birds* 99: 236–241.

—. In press. Chestnut-eared Bunting on Fair Isle: new to Britain. *Brit. Birds*.

(Breeds S Siberia from N Sakhalin and Russian Maritime provinces bordering S Sea of Okhotsk, W to Altai Mountains and upper Yenisey River, N to 62°N in Yakutia, and south to mountains in NE China. Winters China south of Yangtze River, to N Indochina and Thailand.)

### Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* (2, 32, 2)

**Devon** Lundy, first-winter, 14th October, trapped, photo (R. Castle, L. James *et al.*). Berry Head, first-winter, 18th–19th, 27th October (H. Vaughan *et al.*).

In northwest Russia this remains a scarce and generally elusive species, yet it managed to spread to Finland in the 1940s, although the fluctuating population there has always been low, with an average of less than ten breeding pairs found annually (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997). The persistence of the Finnish population at these low levels may suggest that others go undetected and that perhaps the species is more widespread than thought. The westward expansion failed to progress beyond Finland, there being few records elsewhere in the Baltic States; for example, the only Estonian records are of a male in May 1977 and, subsequently, a pair in the same location in 1980 when a brood was observed in late June (Leibak *et al.* 1994). Nominate *cyanurus* ranges right across Asia to Kamchatka and Japan and, though scarce and patchily distributed in European Russia, it occurs in much greater densities farther east, with 120 singing males in 100 km of favourable habitat in Ural Mountain forests (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997).

Some British birders will fondly recall encounters with the slightly brighter Central Asian race *rufilatus* from such places as Nainital in India (though birds in the western Himalayas are sometimes separated as *pallidior*), but this race is essentially sedentary, and British birds originate from the coniferous forests of northern Eurasia, within the breeding range of *cyanurus*.

As befits an eastern vagrant, there is a marked east-coast bias to records; for example, despite saturation coverage there is still no record from Scilly and there is still just one Cornish record (Rame Head, October 1999). Autumn records range from 16th September (Fair Isle, Shetland, 1993) to 16th November (Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, 2002), but for those intent on finding their own it is notable that 12 of the last 20 records have been discovered between 11th and 22nd October.

Ageing and sexing is not always as straightforward as a quick glance at a field guide might suggest. Clear evidence of steely blue on the upperparts, often admixed with brown, points to an adult male, but females and first-winters need a more critical approach, even in the hand. A moult contrast within the greater coverts and pale tips to these feathers point to a first-winter, as does a pinkish/yellow inside to the upper mandible (dark brown-grey in adults; *BWP*). A first-winter with some bluish tones on the lesser coverts and scapulars will be a male; though Alström *et al.* 1991 suggested that females can also show blue tones to these feathers.

This species remains one of the most sought-after of rarities, and though Red-flanked Bluetails have lost the enigmatic rarity appeal of the closely related Siberian Rubythroat, it is doubtful that British birders will ever tire of them.

Hagemeijer, W. J. M., & Blair, M. J. (eds.) 1997. *The EBCC Atlas of European Breeding Birds: their distribution and abundance*. Poyser, London.

Leibak, E., Lillileht, V., & Veromann, H. 1994. *Birds of Estonia: status, distribution and numbers*. Estonian Ornithological Society, Tallinn.

(Small population persists in NE Finland but main range in cool temperate forests of N Eurasia from E Russia and Siberia to Kamchatka, N Japan and NE China. Winters S China, Taiwan and S Japan, through SE Asia to N peninsular Thailand.)

### Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus* Eastern race *S. t. maurus*, 'Siberian Stonechat' (1, 315, 3)

**Cornwall** Porthgarra, 6th–14th October, photo (per [www.birdguides.com](http://www.birdguides.com)).

**Dorset** Wick Hams, 24th October (L. Chappell).

**Durham** Whitburn, first-winter, 19th–21st October (D. M. Foster, B. Unwin *et al.*).

**2003 Norfolk** Titchwell, first-winter ♂, 24th–27th October (*Brit. Birds* 97: 596); note revised dates.

**2004 Cleveland** South Gare, ♂, 20th October (I. J. Foster, R. C. Taylor). In addition, note amendment to South Gare ♀/first-winter published in last report (*Brit. Birds* 98: 672); correct dates are 24th October to 2nd November.

(Breeds widely across N Asia from N Urals S to N Caspian Sea, Mongolia and N China, E to Kolyma basin, Okhotsk coast and N Japan. Winters from N Indian subcontinent to S China and SE Asia.)

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005



Stef McElwee

28. Female Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*, Holy Island, Northumberland, November 2005.**Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (1, 20, 1)**

**Suffolk** Landguard Point, 4th October, photo (D. Langlois, N. Odin *et al.*).

(Small European population restricted to E Greece, Bulgaria, Ukraine and SW Russia. In Asia, breeds widely across arid grasslands from Turkey through Kazakhstan, Mongolia and N China, S to Iran and N Pakistan. Winters from N Sahel zone to E Africa, and throughout Middle East from Arabian Peninsula to S Iran, Pakistan and NW India.)

**Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (9, 79, 7)**

**Cleveland** South Gare, ♂, 29th November, photo (C. V. Greenley, B. Taylor *et al.*).

**Hampshire** Hayling Island, ♂, 13th November, photo (A. C. Johnson, S. K. Woolley *et al.*).

**Kent** Herne Bay, first-winter ♀, 19th–21st November, photo (T. N. Hodge, B. J. Matlock *et al.*).

Leysdown, Sheppey, ♀, 5th December (A. M. Woodcock).

**Norfolk** Eccles-on-Sea, ♀, 1st–4th November, photo (N. Bowman *et al.*). Caister, first-winter ♂, 19th–22nd November, photo (A. & J. M. Grieve *et al.*).

**Northumberland** Holy Island, ♀, 31st October to 4th November, photo (P. R. Massey *et al.*) (plate 28).

**2004 Kent** Walpole Bay, Margate, 3rd November (S. D. W. Mount, F. Solly).

(Breeds widely but discontinuously across arid and desert regions of N Africa from Morocco to Middle East, N to S Caucasus, and across C Asia from C Iran and N Pakistan to Mongolia and N China. Some N African birds resident, but many winter in Sahara and Sahel region of N Africa from Mauritania E to Ethiopia and Somalia. Asian breeders winter from Arabian Peninsula to NW India.)

**White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* (27, 37, 1)**

**Shetland** Wester Quarff, Mainland, 28th April (P. V. Harvey, D. Playfair, R. Riddington *et al.*).

This is the first spring record since one seen briefly at Weaversham, Cheshire, on 7th May 1964, although one was on Copeland, Co. Down, on 16th–20th April 1993. The only other British records in spring were in Cleveland in 1870 and Cornwall in March 1903. Two seen together in Northumberland on 26th April 1952 were rejected in the BBRC's recent review of 1950–57 records (Wallace *et al.* 2006). It is perhaps no coincidence that the 2005 record should follow a record autumn for the species and surely it signifies an individual that has overwintered successfully in western Europe rather than a spring vagrant from the east. Until relatively recently there seemed to be a widespread belief that all spring Siberian vagrants were escaped cagebirds. There is now, however, a strong body of evidence that suggests that many 'eastern' vagrants occur naturally in spring, either after overwintering successfully in western Europe, or, indeed, as genuine spring overshoots.

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

Wallace, D. I. M., Bradshaw, C., & Rogers, M. J. 2006. A review of the 1950–57 British rarities. *Brit. Birds* 99: 460–464.

(Palearctic race *aurea* widespread in C and S Siberia from Yenisey River to Ussuriland, S to N Mongolia, extreme NE China, Korean Peninsula and Japan. Small (isolated?) population extends W to foothills of European Urals. Winters widely throughout S China, Taiwan and S Japan to Indochina and C Thailand. Nominate race resident or altitudinal migrant in Himalayas, SW China and Taiwan.)

### Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* (0, 45, 1)



Stef McElwee

29. Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus*, Northaw Great Wood, Hertfordshire, November 2005.

Hertfordshire Northaw Great Wood, 13th–25th November, photo (R. Callf *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 99: plate 25; plate 29).

(Breeds extreme NE Siberia E throughout Alaska and N Canada to Labrador and Newfoundland. Migrates across E USA to winter in N South America.)

### Veery *Catharus fuscescens* (0, 6, 1)

Shetland Northdale, Unst, first-winter, 22nd September, trapped, photo (J. Fairclough, R. Lockwood, G. Woodburn *et al.*), later killed by cat (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 402).

Only the seventh record for Britain and the first for Shetland; sadly, this bird met a sorry end. This is the earliest British record, the previous earliest being that on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on 30th September 2002.

(Breeds Canada from S British Columbia, E to Newfoundland, S through warm temperate USA, E of Rocky Mountains and S to N Arizona and Georgia. Winters N South America from Colombia to NW Brazil.)

### Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* (2, 52, 5)

Gower Townhill, Swansea, ♂ *T. r. atrogularis*, 29th December to 15th March 2006, photo (A. & W. Woodward *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 99: plates 75 & 76).

Shetland Geosetter, Mainland, first-winter ♀ *T. r. atrogularis*, 4th October, photo (H. R. Harrop *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 403; plate 30). Fair Isle, first-winter ♀ *T. r. atrogularis*, 21st–22nd October, photo (M. D. Warren *et al.*); ♂ *T. r. atrogularis*, 23rd–24th October, photo (R. J. Butcher, D. N. Shaw *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 99: plate 26).

Somerset Curload, ♂ *T. r. atrogularis*, 24th December to 3rd January 2006 (R. Billington *et al.*).

(Western, black-throated form *atrogularis* breeds in C and N Urals, E across SW Siberia and E Kazakhstan, to NW China. Winters Iraq to N India, E through Himalayan foothills to Bhutan. Nominate red-throated form breeds to E in C Siberia, wintering in E Himalayas and S fringe of Tibetan Plateau from Nepal to SW China, and N to NE China.)



Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005



30. First-winter female Black-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis atrogularis*, Geosetter, Mainland Shetland, October 2005. We include the entire description here as an example of the sort of informative and instructive composite that birders equipped with a decent camera are now producing. Hugh Harrop

American Robin *Turdus migratorius* (0, 22, 0)

2004 Lincolnshire Grimsby, first-winter ♀, 1st January to 8th March (T. Moore, S. Smith *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: 675); note corrected observer details.

(Breeds throughout North America from tree line of Alaska and N Canada, S to S Mexico. Winters from S Canada to S USA and C America, S to Guatemala.)

**Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola* (1, 31, 0)**2004 Shetland** Pool of Virkie, Mainland, 6th–7th October (D. & J. J. Gilroy *et al.*).

(Northern race *rubescens* breeds across C and E Siberia, N to 64°N, from Irtysh River E to Yakutia and Sea of Okhotsk. Four other races breed to the S, from NE Kazakhstan through Mongolia to Ussuriland and N and NE China. Winters from NE India to S China, and S throughout SE Asia.)

**Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolata* (7, 97, 4)

**Shetland** Foula, first-winter, 5th–6th September, trapped, photo (A. R. Mainwood, B. H. Thomason) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 404). Out Skerries, 5th–6th October, photo (P. Forrest, M. J. McKee, T. Warrick *et al.*). Fair Isle, 13th–14th October, trapped, photo (M. D. Warren *et al.*); 17th October (S. J. Aspinall, M. Culshaw, P. A. Harris *et al.*).

(Singing males regular in E Finland. To E, breeds discontinuously from C Urals E across much of Siberia to Kamchatka, Kuril Islands, Hokkaido and NE China. Winters in Indian subcontinent, from Nepal E through NE India into SE Asia and Philippines.)

**Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides* (many, 628, 4)**Leicestershire** Rutland Water, 13th–24th April (T. P. Appleton, J. Wright *et al.*).**Perth & Kinross** Cairnie Pier, ♂ in song, 10th–16th May (A. J. Leitch *et al.*).**Somerset** Westhay Moor, ♂ in song, 16th April to 11th May, photo (B. D. Gibbs, A. Hepworth, R. Savage *et al.*). Meare Heath, 16th June to 26th July (D. J. Chown, J. A. Hazell, N. Smith *et al.*).

This species was removed from the list of rarities considered by BBRC at the end of 1982, following a bumper period of records (194 individuals from 1977 to 1982 inclusive) and a scatter of breeding records in the south and east of England. This colonisation, however, was not sustained and the number of records declined slowly, prompting its reinstatement on the BBRC list in 1999. Since then it has remained a great rarity. The singing bird in Perth & Kinross was the ninth for Scotland and the first there away from Shetland. One from Fair Isle, Shetland, on 30th September 2003 still awaits publication as it is currently being assessed as the first British record of the eastern subspecies *L. l. fusca*. As is often the case with subspecies identification, it is not quite as straightforward as it may at first appear, since there is a tendency for differences in plumage to be clinal across the range.

(Breeds discontinuously in W Europe, from Iberia to Netherlands; range contracting to SE, although still expanding NE into Baltic countries. To E, breeds through temperate Russia S through Ukraine to Black Sea coasts. European birds winter in W Africa from Senegal to N Nigeria. C Asian race *fusca* breeds from Caspian Sea E across Kazakhstan to NW China, wintering in NE Africa.)

**Moustached Warbler** *Acrocephalus melanopogon* (0, 0, 0)**1946 Cambridgeshire** near Cambridge, 3rd–20th August, breeding pair. After review, identification considered unproven and the record is no longer acceptable.**1965 Buckinghamshire** Wendover, 31st July. (*Brit. Birds* 59: 294). After review, identification considered unproven and the record is no longer acceptable.

BBRC has previously reviewed post-1950 records of Moustached Warbler, and rejected all apart from the 1965 Buckinghamshire record (see *Brit. Birds* 93: 29–38). Following the recent review by BOURC (*Brit. Birds* 99: 465–478), the identification of the birds involved in the controversial 1946 breeding attempt near Cambridge was considered unsafe, even though they had been watched for prolonged periods between 3rd and 20th August by several observers, and the record was no longer acceptable as the first British occurrence. This left the 1965 Buckinghamshire bird as the first and only British record. When this record was reviewed, it was considered that the identification was unproven, since Paddyfield Warbler *A. agricola* had not been eliminated. Consequently, Moustached Warbler has been removed from the British List.

(Nominate form largely resident, but inland populations disperse to warmer regions of breeding range outside breeding season. Locally distributed throughout Mediterranean basin from NW Morocco and eastern Spain E to Greece, and N to southern Germany, eastern Austria and Hungary. Other races breed Ukraine and Turkey E to C Asia, wintering from Israel to NW India.)

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005



Iain Leach

31. Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*, Torness, Lothian, October 2005.**Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (1, 55, 4)**

**Kent** Cleve Marsh, South Swale, 20th September, trapped, photo (C. G. Bradshaw, J. Pritchard *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 405).

**Lothian** Torness Power Station, 13th–29th October, photo (D. Allan, W. Clunie, C. N. Davison, B. A. Hickman *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 99: plate 27; plate 31).

**Scilly** St Mary's, 15th October, photo (J. Hall *et al.*).

**Shetland** Skaw, Unst, adult, 22nd–23rd June, photo (M. A. Maher *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 282).

Kent's second record follows hot on the heels of the first, at Dungeness on 9th September 2003. It was netted during a routine ringing session, was seen only briefly in the field subsequently and presents further evidence that this species is doubtless being missed in southern reedbeds during the autumn.

(In Europe, restricted to Black Sea coasts from Bulgaria and Danube delta E to Ukraine. To E, breeds widely across steppes of S Russia and SW Siberia, Kazakhstan and NW China, S to Uzbekistan and N Pakistan. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent N of Sri Lanka.)

**Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (9, 61, 2)**

**Northumberland** St Mary's Island, 17th October (C. Bradshaw, A. Curry, N. P. Dales *et al.*).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, 16th–17th June, trapped, photo (A. B. Powell, D. N. Shaw, M. D. Warren *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 283).

(Breeds in S Finland, Baltic countries and European Russia to 64°N. To E, found across C Siberia to Lake Baikal and upper Lena River, S through Kazakhstan and Tajikistan to N Pakistan. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent S to Sri Lanka and E into NW Myanmar.)

**Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (15, 204, 4)**

**Bedfordshire** Willington Gravel-pits, ♂ in song, 15th May to 9th June, photo (M. Thomas *et al.*).

**Caernarfonshire** Conwy, 10th–18th June (A. Davies *et al.*).

**Kent** Dungeness, ♂ in song, 18th May (R. J. Price *et al.*).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, 13th May, trapped, photo (M. D. Warren *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 183).

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

(Breeds discontinuously throughout much of continental Europe from Iberia to Greece, N to S Sweden and Finland, and E across S Russia, Turkey and Caucasus to W Siberia. C Asian race *zarudnyi* breeds from Volga to NW China. Winters throughout C and S Africa.)

**Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* (1, 93, 4)**

**Norfolk** Winterton, 1st September (P. Cawley *et al.*).

**Northumberland** Farne Islands, 16th–17th August, photo (R. Ahmed, D. Steele *et al.*).

**Shetland** Easter Quarff, Mainland, 2nd–3rd September (R. A. Haywood *et al.*). Fair Isle, 4th–6th September, photo (M. D. Warren *et al.*).

**2003 Durham** Whitburn, 2nd October (J. P. Cook, D. M. Foster).

(Range expanding W, and breeding in S Finland. To E, breeds C Russia and W Siberia to Yenisey valley, C and N Kazakhstan to W Mongolia and W Xinjiang province, China. Winters N and peninsular India, S to Karnataka.)

**Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* (4, 523, 13)**

**Devon** Lundy, ♂, 17th–18th June, photo (L. H. & R. H. Hurrell).

**Highland** Dunvegan, Skye, 22nd October (J. Lawson).

**Kent** Dungeness, ♂, 1st May (J. K. Archer, G. Spinks *et al.*).

**Lothian** Whitesands Bay, ♂, 28th May (M. Griffin *et al.*).

**Northeast Scotland** Collieston, ♀, 20th May (P. S. Crockett *et al.*).

**Northumberland** Farne Islands, first-winter ♀, 10th September, photo (M. A. Maher *et al.*).

**Orkney** Windwick, South Ronaldsay, ♂, 20th–21st April (P. Higson).

**Scilly** St Agnes, first-summer ♀, 20th–23rd May (D. Page *et al.*).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, first-summer ♀, 1st–6th June, photo (H. Price, M. D. Warren *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 227). Toab, Mainland, first-summer ♀, 6th June (P. R. French, H. C. Moncrieff, S. C. Ratch).

Quendale, Mainland, ♂, 20th October (S. J. Minton, R. Riddington).

**Sussex** Beachy Head, first-summer ♂, 30th April (D. & J. F. Cooper *et al.*).

**Yorkshire, East Spurn**, first-summer ♂, 1st May (D. Blackmore, L. J. Degnan).

**1998 Yorkshire, East Spurn**, ♂ *S. c. albistriata*, 12th–13th May, photo (*Brit. Birds* 92: 596); not previously attributed to subspecies.

**2001 Essex** Fingringhoe Wick, River Colne, ♂, 13th May (Mr & Mrs K. R. Mead).

**2004 Shetland** Tresta, Fetlar, first-summer ♂, 7th–10th May, photo (P. R. French, M. Smith, B. H. Thomason).

Described by Pallas from an Italian specimen in 1764, this classic Mediterranean-slope (rather than Alpine) scrub warbler was first obtained on St Kilda on 14th June 1894. (It was granted one extra day's life by first appearing on the day before, a Sabbath of the then strict ministry of the isles.) The next six British birds also came in spring; it was the first Irish one, in September 1933, that opened the autumn account. Other autumn birds came in 1953 and it seemed that the Subalpine Warbler was another rarity prone to vagrancy on both its migrations.

From 1966 and particularly from 1975, spring finds mounted rapidly, effectively quadrupling by 1985 (to 76% of all since 1958) and increasing again by half the previous average in the next decade to 1994. Autumn discoveries grew too but not annually, well below the spring trend and that which might have been expected from the increased rarity-hunting in that season.

In the decade from 1995, spring finds have outnumbered autumn ones by five to one. Furthermore, the spring mean date is getting earlier, with two appearing on 26th and 30th March and 32 April individuals making up 21% of all spring records. After a tidal wave of 131 birds from May to July, only 29 were discovered from August to October; the last four have straggled to 9th November. For a Mediterranean dweller, the overall span of 228 days in a temperate land is remarkable; the record number in a year was 36 in 1995.

Although formerly assumed to be a rarity strictly attached to isles and coasts, 13 since 1971 have been found inland. Four of these penetrated the area of the London Natural History Society: three at Barn Elms Reservoirs (now the WWT Wetland Centre) and one at Beddington Sewage-farm. How many other Subalpines (and other so-called rarities) lurk unseen away from Britain's periphery?

In 1971, the BOU accepted that the original St Kilda specimen and a bird on Fair Isle in May 1966 were nominate *cantillans*, while another two birds from Fair Isle in May 1951 and April 1964 resem-

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

bled *albistriata*. Confidence in such separations ebbed, however, and, with both Svensson (1992) and BWP (1992) stating that the species' racial radiation was still incompletely understood, BBRC remained shy of trinomial attributions. Suddenly, in the 1993 report, the Committee did allow six spring males to be logged as *albistriata* but then again fell silent. In 1996, Vinicombe & Cottridge postulated that the later dated spring males at northern localities were mostly *albistriata*. With range extensions known in Romania and Bulgaria, the thought had merit; indeed, it had occurred to Ken Williamson 22 years earlier (Williamson 1974).

Following Shirihai *et al.* 2000, fresh attention was directed to all British occurrences, in spring (e.g. Cade & Walker 2004) and even autumn (e.g. Gantlett 2001). In 2003, BBRC announced that a review was underway of all records since 1993, and until this is complete, further comment on racial occurrence patterns seems pointless. It should not be forgotten, however, that all races mix readily on passage. In Malta in 1914, Wardlaw Ramsay (1923) noted two shot *albistriata* on 4th September and two shot *cantillans* only five days later. Similarly, in winter many *albistriata* end up over 20° west of their main breeding haunts.

Given the sinkholes of subadult male, female and immature plumages, is Britain really the venue for subspecific study of this species? No claims for the species from 2000 to 2004 have been rejected but in the past the species has been confused with Spectacled Warbler *S. conspicillata* in autumn. The full account of the first accepted autumn record of the latter is helpful in understanding how distinctive the other 'mini-Whitethroat' is (Broyd 2000).

Since it is not accorded rarity status in south European countries, other vagrancy records of Subalpine Warbler are difficult to assess but overshoots have reached Iceland, Ireland, the Low Countries, northern Europe east to Poland and even Ukraine. Birds from Madeira and Cape Verdes have demonstrated even more exceptional wandering. Despite some decline in both the French and Greek populations of Subalpine Warbler between 1990 and 2000 (BirdLife International 2004), the European population as a whole appears essentially stable, so the upsurge of British spring records is surprising. With no further growth since 1995, however, it may well have stalled.

BirdLife International. 2004. *Birds in Europe: population estimates, trends and conservation status*. BirdLife, Cambridge.

Broyd, S. 2000. The Spectacled Warbler on the Isles of Scilly. *Birding World* 13: 418–419.

Cade, M., & Walker, D. 2004. Eastern Subalpine Warblers in spring 2004. *Birding World* 17: 202–203.

Gantlett, S. 2001. Subalpine Warbler forms in Britain. *Birding World* 14: 482–483.

Shirihai, H., Gargallo, G., Helbig, A., Harris, A., & Cottridge, D. M. 2000. Subalpine Warbler: identification, ageing and sexing.

*Birding World* 13: 234–250.

Svensson, L. 1992. *Identification Guide to European Passerines*. 4th edn. Privately published, Stockholm.

Wardlaw Ramsay, R. G. 1923. *Guide to the Birds of Europe and North Africa*. Gurney and Jackson, London and Edinburgh.

Williamson, K. 1974. *Identification for Ringers 3: The Genus Sylvia*. BTO, Tring.

(Four races widely but locally distributed throughout Mediterranean basin from NW Africa and Iberia N to S France, and E to Greece and W Turkey. Winters S of Sahara from Mauritania and Senegal to S Egypt and Sudan.)

### Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* (0, 71, 2)

Fife Fife Ness Muir, ♂, 15th October to at least 3rd November, trapped (A. MacCormick, M. Oksien *et al.*).

Shetland Lerwick, Mainland, ♀, 2nd–4th June (D. Coutts, P. V. Harvey *et al.*).

(Largely resident or dispersive throughout Mediterranean basin, from NW Africa and Iberia to S France, N Italy and E to W Turkey and Israel. Some winter in N Africa from Sahara S to Mauritania and S Libya.)

### Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* (5, 406, 35) European and W Siberian race *P. t. viridanus*

Cleveland Seaton Snook, 10th–11th September (S. C. Bell, G. Icton *et al.*). South Gare, two, 10th September, photo (N. A. Preston *et al.*). West View, Hartlepool, 11th September (G. Joynt).

Durham Whitburn, two, first-winters, 4th–6th September, photo (J. P. Cook, T. I. Mills, B. Unwin *et al.*). Trow Quarry, South Shields, 10th–12th September, photo (J. Chapman, M. Newsome *et al.*).

Marsden Quarry, South Shields, 15th–16th October, photo (P. T. Bell, T. I. Mills, M. Newsome *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Saltfleet Haven, 11th September, photo (G. P. Catley, N. Drinkall *et al.*).

Norfolk Thornham, 1st September, photo (P. Eele, A. Grimsey *et al.*). Blakeney Point, 10th September, photo (R. F. Porter, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*). Scolt Head, 12th September (N. M. Lawton *et al.*).

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

**Northumberland** Farne Islands, 10th–11th September, photo (N. Dawson *et al.*). Low Hauxley, 10th–11th September (M. J. Carr). Newbiggin, 10th September (S. J. McElwee, J. G. Steele *et al.*). Hauxley, first-winter, 11th September (I. Fisher).

**Scilly** St Agnes, 28th September (T. Folland, J. M. Turton *et al.*). St Martin's, 27th October, photo (D. Le Croisette, P. Sterry *et al.*).

**Shetland** Norwick, Unst, adult, 13th–15th August, trapped, photo (M. A. Maher, M. G. Pennington *et al.*). Noss, 31st August to 5th September, photo (K. Bliss, T. J. Sykes *et al.*). Quendale, Mainland, first-winter, 5th September (R. M. Mellor *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 351). Sumburgh, Mainland, adult, 11th September, photo (P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington *et al.*). Wester Quarff, Mainland, first-winter, 26th September to 13th October (R. A. Haywood *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 406; plate 32).

**Sussex** Beachy Head, 7th–9th October, photo (M. Casemore, D. & J. F. Cooper *et al.*).

**Yorkshire**, East Flamborough Head, ♂ in song, 27th May, photo (T. Dixon *et al.*); 5th September (R. Baines); 6th–8th September, photo (F. X. Moffatt *et al.*); 10th September (A. M. Hanby, G. Waddington *et al.*); 11th September (F. X. Moffatt, I. Sims); 11th–13th September (J. B. Leason, F. X. Moffatt). Spurn, 31st August (I. C. & S. J. M. Whitehouse); 10th–12th September (A. J. & M. G. Stoyle); 10th–13th September, photo (A. Roadhouse, C. Featherstone, S. Routledge *et al.*). Kilnsea, 10th September (G. Picton, M. J. Pilsworth *et al.*).

**Yorkshire**, North Filey Country Park, 3rd–5th September (J. M. Turton *et al.*).

**2004 Fife** Fife Ness Muir, two, 25th August (G. Owens, R. Shand *et al.*).

Ever defying those who wish for one species to be three tickable forms, the complex radiation of the Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* is perhaps the best example of an avian 'ring species' (Collinson 2001). Three of its six subspecies, the most migratory, have reached Britain.

'Western Greenish Warbler' *Ph. t. viridanus*

The western race was first described by Blyth from wintering birds at Calcutta and in Nepal in 1843. The first British example was secured by G. H. Caton-Haigh, as it tried to recuperate after a drift to North Cotes, Lincolnshire, on 5th September 1896, 56 days ahead of Britain's first Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Ph. proregulus*. Like the 'seven-striped sprite', Greenish Warbler remained undetected for another half century. The second was one of the earliest post-war rarities and one of the last to be shot, an adult on Whalsay, Shetland, on 12th September 1945.

From 1949 to 1957, a scatter of early observatory finds had all the signs of the bird's future status: one on 20th April (at Spurn and still the earliest ever), two (one in song) in June and seven from mid July to mid September. After a succession of westward surges of breeding birds into Fennoscandia, presumably from the north Russian population (most recently in the early 1990s, just ahead of the largest-ever British influx, of 40 in 1995), *viridanus* has become one of the more commonly found and most regularly dated of rarities. There are peaks in early June and late August (or in early September in 2005) and the overall pattern of occurrence recalls that of the Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*



Hugh Harrop

32. Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, Wester Quarff, Shetland, October 2005.

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

(Wallace 1999). Oddly, however, for a bird whose total range extends east to Japan, it has remained relatively scarce in late autumn (with only 6% of records dated from late September to early November). If far-eastern individuals do reach Britain as 'reversed migrants', they are seemingly far less prone to navigational error than the partly sympatric Yellow-browed *Ph. inornatus* and Pallas's Leaf Warblers.

When, particularly in the 1960s, its differentiation from 'eastern' Common Chiffchaffs *Ph. collybita* sporting wing-bars was insecure, there were more acceptances of Greenish Warblers that came late in autumn and even wintered. Twenty of these were removed in an exhaustive review (Dean 1985) and the species has yet to resurface in our milder winter habitats that have tempted several other Asian warblers. Conversely, the findings of spring birds, often males in song, have risen to 24. These must presumably stem from the buoyant population of over 8,000 pairs in Finland and the Baltic States or the more fitful colonisers of Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland (Mitchell & Young 1999). South of these countries, *viridanus* remains a distinctly scarce vagrant, with only 38 records in six countries from Belgium south to Spain and west to Ireland (up to 1996).

'Two-barred Greenish Warbler' *Ph. t. plumbeitarsus*

First described in 1861 by Swinhoe from Hopeh, China, this more contrasting, greener or more olive bird overlaps with *viridanus* in southern Siberia (Vaurie 1959). In the Hamardaban range west of Lake Baikal, *plumbeitarsus* inhabits the forest of mixed taiga but leaves an uppermost belt of small scattered trees in scree to *viridanus*. In 1993, the local Russian ornithologists were separating them on song and without optical aids (P. A. Lassey pers. comm.). Clearly, some birds are in the 'watershed' of Siberian vagrants to Britain.

The three British records (at the time of writing) have been found on Scilly, on 21st–27th October 1987 and 27th–28th September 2003, and at Holkham, Norfolk, on 15th–16th October 1996 (Kemp 1996; Bradshaw 2001; Dodgson 2003). Another, at Filey, North Yorkshire, on 16th–18th October 2006 is awaiting assessment; and see also Stoddart (2003). The only other European records are of single birds in autumn in Finland and The Netherlands and, astonishingly, a July bird in Sweden, all since 1990. The mean arrival date for the autumn birds is about 5th October, four weeks later than the peak period for *viridanus*.

'Green Warbler' *Ph. t. nitidus*

Yet another taxon first described by Blyth in 1843 from Calcutta and restricted when breeding to southwest Asia, Green Warbler delivered one of the biggest-ever surprises to British observers when one appeared on Scilly from 26th September to 4th October 1984. In fact, it had been 'trailed' 116 years earlier when the bird harvesters of Heligoland produced one for Heinrich Gätke on 11th October 1867. Along with the partly sympatric Plain Leaf Warbler *Ph. neglectus* in Sweden on 10th October 1991, these three individuals make up an intriguing trio of truly extraordinary vagrants.

The best identification texts for the Greenish Warbler complex are Beaman & Madge (1998) and van der Vliet *et al.* (2001). The Committee's view of the diagnostic characters of *plumbeitarsus* was noted in 2004 (*Brit. Birds* 97: 610). The recent (2000–04) rejection rate for *viridanus* has been 7%. With little evidence of really far-flung vagrancy, *viridanus* hardly qualifies as a classic 'reversed migrant' but its sibling taxa *plumbeitarsus* and *nitidus* do; note that both of the rarer forms remain subject to full BBRC disciplines.

Beaman, M., & Madge, S. 1998. *The Handbook of Bird Identification*. Helm, London.

Bradshaw, C. 2001. 'Two-barred Greenish Warbler' on Scilly: new to Britain and Ireland. *Brit. Birds* 94: 284–288.

Collinson, M. 2001. Greenish Warbler, 'Two-barred Greenish Warbler' and the speciation process. *Brit. Birds* 94: 278–283.

Dean, A. R. 1985. Review of British status and identification of Greenish Warbler. *Brit. Birds* 78: 437–451.

Dodgson, S. 2003. The Two-barred Greenish Warbler on Scilly. *Birding World* 16: 422.

Kemp, J. 1996. The Two-barred Greenish Warbler at Wells. *Birding World* 9: 396–397.

Mitchell, D., & Young, S. 1999. *Photographic Handbook of the Rare Birds of Britain and Europe*. New Holland, London.

Stoddart, A. 2003. From the Rarities Committee's files: the Holme wing-barred *Phylloscopus* warbler. *Brit. Birds* 96: 74–78.

van der Vliet, R. E., Kennerley, P. R., & Small, B. J. 2001. Identification of Two-barred, Greenish, Bright-green and Arctic Warblers.

*Dutch Birding* 23: 175–191.

Vaurie, C. 1959. *The Birds of the Palearctic Fauna. Passeriformes*. H. F. & G. Witherby Ltd, London.

Wallace, D. I. M. 1999. History of the Common Rosefinch in Britain and Ireland, 1869–1996. *Brit. Birds* 92: 445–471.

(The European and W Siberian race *viridanus* has expanded W during 20th century to E Poland, Baltic countries

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

and S Finland, with sporadic breeding in Germany, Czech Republic, Sweden and Norway. To E, breeds through Russia and W Siberia to Yenisey River, S through NW Mongolia to N Afghanistan and NW Himalayas. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent. Other races occur throughout Himalayas to SW China, wintering from Indian subcontinent to Indochina.)

**Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (12, 254, 8)**

**Dorset** Reap Lane, Southwell, 9th–12th October, photo (N. Hopper *et al.*).

**Orkney** Herston, South Ronaldsay, first-winter, 4th September (P. Higson, J. A. & R. McCutcheon).

**Silly St Mary's**, 6th September, photo (A. Gardener *et al.*). **St Martin's**, 12th October (B. Minnett-Smith, J. R. Walsh *et al.*).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, 22nd–23rd June, trapped, photo (M. D. Warren *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 284).

Gorie, Bressay, 2nd–6th September, photo (D. P. Hall, S. J. Minton, T. J. Sykes *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 407). Skaw, Unst, 2nd September, photo (M. G. Pennington *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 352).

Foula, first-winter, 3rd–4th September, trapped, photo (A. R. Mainwood).

(Breeds locally in N Scandinavia, becoming widespread across N Russia E to extreme NE Siberia, S to Baikal region, Ussuriland and NE China. Other races breed in Alaska, and Kamchatka through Kuril Islands to N Japan. Migrant through E China to winter widely in SE Asia to Java, Philippines and Sulawesi.)

**Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* (0, 83, 2)**

**Devon** Seaton Hole, at least 26th November to 3rd December, photo (G. M. Haig, S. D. Waite *et al.*).

**Yorkshire**, North Filey, 7th–30th December, photo (S. Cochrane, J. Harwood, C. C. Thomas *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 99: plate 45).

**2002 Silly St Mary's**, 12th–15th November (K. Webb *et al.*).

(Breeds in Altai Mountains, S through Tien Shan and Pamirs to NE Afghanistan, NW Himalayas and mountains of NW China. Winters in S Afghanistan to N India, E to W Bengal. Another race breeds in C China from Shanxi to S Yunnan, W to lower slopes of Tibetan Plateau.)

**Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* (1, 258, 12)**

**Cleveland** South Gare, 16th October (C. Dodsworth *et al.*).

**Devon** Prawle Point, 7th October (P. M. Mayer).

**Dorset** Portland, 10th October, photo (P. Morgan, per J. A. Lidster).

**Fife** Isle of May, 16th October, trapped, photo (D. A. Bell, A. J. Gramauskas *et al.*).

**Hampshire** Sherborne St John, 7th December (N. Montegriffo *et al.*).

**Kent** Bockhill, St Margaret's, 3rd–4th October, photo (P. Chantler *et al.*).

**Silly Gugh**, 5th–6th October (P. A. Dukes *et al.*). **St Agnes**, 10th October (A. Jayne); 10th–14th



George Reszeter

33. Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi*, St Agnes, Scilly, October 2005.



## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

October, photo (M. & N. Gatward *et al.*) (plate 33). St Martin's, 12th October (P. Lymbery, R. Peach, J. R. Walsh *et al.*).

Sussex Icklesham, 12th October, trapped, photo (D. Fletcher, P. Jones *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Sammy's Point, Easington, 8th–9th October, photo (R. Dale, L. J. Degnan, H. Hipperson *et al.*).

**2004 Northumberland Farne Islands, 30th September** (C. Dodd, D. Parnaby, D. Steele).

First described by Gustav Radde in 1863 from Transbaikalia, this rather vivid and robust bird wandered through three generic names before Claud Ticehurst placed it firmly in *Phylloscopus*. The first British bird fell to the shotgun of G. H. Caton-Haigh at North Cotes, Lincolnshire, on 1st October 1898. Having the most restricted and southerly breeding range of all the warblers that stray west from Siberia, it remained a mythological being for over six decades, escaping even observatory hunters until 1961. On 3rd October, a bird trapped on Blakeney Point, Norfolk, drew the BTO's then Migration Research Officer, Ken Williamson, into the first-ever overnight 'professional twitch'. Roosted in Richard Richardson's aviary, it was released the following morning in front of a few much-envied admirers.

With the appearance of the second Dusky Warbler *Ph. fuscatus* on Fair Isle, Shetland, only 11 days later (and the second and third Pallas's Leaf Warblers *Ph. proregulus* already in the observatories' bag), expectations of more sympatrically breeding vagrants from as far east as Lake Baikal were dramatically raised and never lowered. Over the following 44 years, Radde's Warblers have been found increasingly and major influxes of up to 30 birds occurred in 1982, 1988, 1991 and 2000. None of these have been synchronised with exceptional arrivals of Dusky Warblers and, unlike the case with that species, there are no spring records of Radde's while the first winter record was not until December 2005. Furthermore, although in 2000 it briefly went ahead of Dusky in grand-total terms, its records have collapsed in the last five years to an average of only six.

In Fennoscandia and the rest of Europe, the long-noted southerly bias in its British occurrences is similarly evident and Radde's Warbler has been found notably less frequently than Dusky Warbler. As the latter's breeding area is at least three times as large as that of Radde's and ranges at least 7° further north, the difference in status of these two warblers within Europe makes more sense than the overall similarity portrayed in the British record.

The once over-emphasised risk of confusing Radde's and Dusky Warblers was first reduced by Johns & Wallace (1972) and fully removed by Madge (1990). No claims were rejected from 2000 to 2004. Since a third of the breeding area of Radde's Warbler lies west of the Lake Baikal 'watershed', young birds with faulty orientation fully qualify as 'reversed migrants' (Vinicombe & Cottridge 1996).

Johns, R. J., & Wallace, D. I. M. 1972. Field identification of Dusky and Radde's Warblers. *Brit. Birds* 65: 497–501.

Madge, S. 1990. Separating Radde's and Dusky Warblers. *Birding World* 3: 281–285.

(Breeds in S Siberia from Novosibirsk region E to Ussuriland and NE China. Migrates through E China to winter in N Myanmar, Indochina and C Thailand.)

### Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (1, 296, 12)

**Borders** St Abb's Head, 15th October (D. Graham).

**Cleveland** Boulby Cliffs, 19th–22nd October, trapped, photo (S. Farish, D. A. Money, R. C. Taylor *et al.*).

**Kent** Dungeness, 8th October (R. H. Bonser, M. Lopez, S. Mills); 12th–13th November, photo (D. Bunney, O. J. Leyshon *et al.*).

**Lothian** Scoughall, 22nd–23rd October (K. Gillon, C. Scott *et al.*).

**Norfolk** Wells East Hills, 19th–28th October (R. Martin, J. R. McCallum *et al.*).

**Shetland** Voe, 16th–19th October, photo (S. Stirrup, T. Wilson *et al.*). Norwick, Unst, 20th October, photo (M. A. Maher, B. H. Thomason *et al.*).

**Suffolk** Kessingland, first-winter, since 2004 to 18th April, photo, see 2004 Suffolk, below. Trimley Marsh, 4th January (N. Odin). Southwold, 16th October (A. Riseborough, R. Walden).

**Sussex** Climping, 7th–10th October (J. Dodd, O. Mitchell).

**Yorkshire**, East Spurn, 7th–16th October, trapped, photo (P. Collins, E. Williams *et al.*).

**2003 Scilly** St Mary's, 9th–30th November, photo (E. A. Fisher, N. Hudson *et al.*).

**2004 Dorset** Hengistbury Head, 11th October (D. N. Smith).

**2004 Suffolk** Kessingland, first-winter, 2nd December to 18th April 2005, trapped, photo (P. Read,

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

R. Wincup *et al.* (*Brit. Birds* 98: 680, plate 59); note corrected dates and observers.

Yet another species first described by Blyth from Calcutta, in 1842, this ground-hugging, wing-flicking and tail-spreading warbler with the hard call of a *Sylvia* was first obtained in Britain on Aukerry, Orkney, on 1st October 1913, three days after the arrival of a Yellow-browed Warbler *Ph. inornatus*. It took cover in a nettle patch but the formidable trio of William Eagle Clarke, Claud Ticehurst and George Stout was its nemesis. After a comparison with other specimens of leaf warblers, it was confirmed to be a female Dusky and also the first for Europe.

Apart from one in Sussex in 1916, which went the way of all Hastings rarities, there was no further sign of Dusky until 1961, when a bird was trapped on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 14th October. From 1964, observatory and other watchpoint enthusiasts began to find others and in 1968, there was the first-ever multiple fall (four birds), on the Norfolk coast. This upsurge of records spoke of truly increased and extended vagrancy, further indicated by the close-dated association in 1968 of 17 Pallas's Leaf *Ph. proregulus* and three Radde's Warblers *Ph. schwarzi*. We had never seen anything like it in just one autumn!

From 1973, the bird became virtually annual, with irregular but mounting peaks in 1976 (5), 1980 (4), 1982 (7), 1987 (16), 1990 (18), 1994 (21), 1997 (18), 2001 (26), 2003 (25) and 2004 (22). Its overall increase is clearly above the trend of any human factor and has been associated closely with the surges of Pallas's Leaf Warblers and, latterly, Hume's Warblers *Ph. humei*. For once this phenomenon is sufficiently cohesive to allow some conjecture on its cause. Far-flung multiple vagrancies are likely to be driven by the combination of above-average breeding success, hence greater numbers of potentially 'reversed migrants', and exceptionally sustained tailwinds. This engine should drive simultaneous westwards surges in all sympatric migratory species. It does not, but it is difficult to rule it out in the case of the above trio of leaf warblers. If one overlays their breeding ranges, a quite localised common source is evident around 48°N 90°E or about 1,000 km WSW of the 'watershed' of Lake Baikal, amid the headwaters of the Yenisey and below the Siberian Altai.

Although often paired by us with Radde's Warbler, the Dusky has maintained a rather different occurrence pattern, with more northerly and usually tardier records. From Shetland south to southeast England, birds appear on average ten days later and outnumber Radde's by 20% but the birds that go on to Scilly and Ireland make up time, being on average only three days later there but being outnumbered by Radde's by 120%. That a few Dusky Warblers actually stop to winter in the southwest is now evident.

Reference to the bird's European vagrancy pattern has been made under Radde's Warbler but it can be added that in its wider European occurrences the Dusky never fails to surprise. Two November birds in Portugal, a January one in Gibraltar, another in Greece in April and a last in Italy in May, all between 1978 and 1994, are intriguing – three turns south, one stop (on a rock covered in its classic low cover) and two head-backs to Asia? Only one Radde's is known to have reached Iberia, in 1966.

An excellent word portrait of the Dusky Warbler was drawn in Vinicombe & Cottridge (1996). The recent rejection rate has been 5%.

(Breeds in Siberia from Ob River N to 60°N, E to Sea of Okhotsk, S to Russian Altai, N Mongolia and Ussuriland through NE China. Winters Nepal to S China and SE Asia to Singapore. Another race breeds on Tibetan Plateau.)

### Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (1, 70, 5)

**Cornwall** Treeve Common, 13th September (M. T. Elliott *et al.*).

**Scilly** St Agnes, first-winter, 29th August to 2nd September (D. Page, V. A. Stratton *et al.*). St Mary's, 30th August to 9th September, photo (T. Folland, N. Hudson, N. Watmough *et al.*).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, 10th September, trapped, photo (D., D. R. & J. F. Cooper *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 408).

**Sussex** Beachy Head, 2nd–4th September (R. H. & M. E. Charlwood, R. K. Hagger *et al.*).

**2004 Yorkshire**, North Bampton, 30th–31st August (J. M. Bayldon, T. D. Charlton *et al.*).

(Breeding range centred on SW Europe from Iberia to N France, S Germany, Italy, Austria, and locally in mountains of N Africa. Winters along S edge of Sahara, from Senegal and S Mauritania to N Cameroon.)

### Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus* (0, 11, 0)

**2004 Cornwall** Windmill Farm, The Lizard, ♂ in song, 30th April to 3rd May, photo (A. R. Pay *et al.*).

(Breeds locally in French Pyrenees and S throughout W Iberia. N African range restricted to NW Morocco and N Algeria to NW Tunisia. Wintering range poorly known.)

Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

**Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* (0, 22, 2)**

**Kent** Dungeness, 2nd and 8th May (S. Davies, D. Walker).

Another record from Kent remains under consideration, as does a spring record from Essex, at Bradwell in April. Dungeness maintains its undisputed position as the most favoured location for this species in Britain. If accepted, the Bradwell bird would be only the second record for Essex, and would give renewed hope for observers outside Kent; there have been only four previous records away from Kent (one in Yorkshire and two in Dorset, in addition to the one in Essex) and none since 1979.

(Widespread resident throughout continental W Europe, from S Spain N to Denmark and E to Poland, W Ukraine and Greece. Elsewhere, resident in mountains of N Africa, W Turkey and W Caucasus.)

**Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (0, 189, 10)**

**Greater London/Essex** Rainham Marshes, ♀/immature, 9th October (P. Hawkins, D. Morrison); three, ♀/immature and two ♂♂s, intermittently 18th December to March 2006, photo (D. Moreton, J. Park, I. Smith *et al.*); three, two ♀♀/immatures and ♂, 19th December to March 2006, maximum count six on 19th December (H. Vaughan *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 99: plate 46).

**Kent** Pegwell Bay, Thanet, juvenile, 27th October (P. Forrest, T. N. Hodge, F. Solly).

**Sussex** Beachy Head, ♂, 11th October (D. R. & J. F. Cooper). Icklesham, first-winter, 14th November, trapped (P. Jones, S. J. Rumsey, J. Willsher *et al.*).

**2004 Kent** Dungeness, two, adults, 26th October (R. J. Price *et al.*).

**2004 Somerset** Ham Wall NNR, four, 21st January (B. Chick).

(Widely but locally distributed throughout C and E Europe, from Denmark, Germany and Italy NE to C Sweden and Estonia. Absent from much of NW Europe but locally numerous in Spain. To E, breeds from S Russia to Volga River. Largely resident or dispersive in Europe. Other forms, sometimes regarded as separate species, occur in C Asia and from S Siberia to NE China, and winter NW Indian subcontinent, S China and S Japan.)

**Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (0, 67, 1)**

**Angus & Dundee** Maryton, Montrose Basin, 22nd–28th October, photo (R. A. Bramhall *et al.*).

Annual totals of Isabelline Shrike have been relatively consistent in Britain recently, with between one and seven (in 1988) records in all but three years since 1977 (there was none in 1983, 1986 and 1992). Adults can arrive at any time, although June is a good month and the late summer/early autumn is also a favoured period; first-winters typically appear from mid October to early November, though some reach Britain in late September (see fig. 2). Fig. 3 illustrates the geographical spread of British records.

As has been mentioned in several recent annual reports, BBRC has been attempting to review the

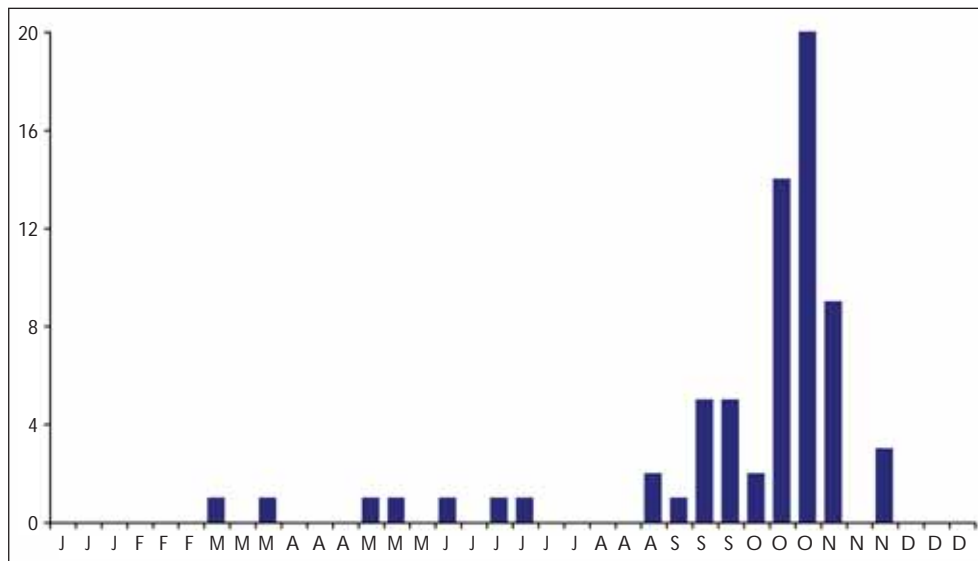


Fig. 2. Arrival times of Isabelline Shrikes *Lanius isabellinus* in Britain, 1950–2005, in ten-day periods.

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

racial identity of records of Isabelline Shrike (an article is in preparation which will explain our decisions in more detail). The Committee is still in the strange position of feeling on the one hand confident in the identification of most (but not all) adults, while on the other having the picture of first-winters confused by the messages coming from those travelling in the taxonomic 'melting pot' of central Asia. As has been said before, and put very simplistically, the view coming from the region where Isabelline Shrikes breed is, increasingly, that the disputed form '*karelini*' (first described by Russian researchers, along with additional forms (see *BWP*), but not widely accepted) may breed sympatrically with *L. i. phoenicuroides*. It is still not known whether '*karelini*' is a variant of *phoenicuroides*, a hybrid population or indeed a separate subspecies, and this confuses any picture we may have of what it looks like. The recent discovery of apparent intergrade pairings between the recognised races further complicates the issue, and reinforces the need to attempt to assign to form only those individuals showing the full suite of characters.

Adult *phoenicuroides* ('Turkestan Shrike') is often typified by a rusty or rufous crown, white supercilium, earth-brown mantle and largely white underparts – females show the same pattern but with less strong coloration. Birds showing these characters but lacking the rufous crown have been attributed to *karelini*, apparent individuals of this form also showing a greyer or sandy cast to the upperparts. Adult *isabellinus* ('Daurian Shrike') has upperparts with a more sandy colour overall, with just a hint of ginger at times; the supercilium is washed orange, as are the underparts – sometimes quite strongly so – the cheeks and the throat. One might expect first-winters to possess the same general features as adults; to some degree it is thought that they do, and young birds often seem to fall into the two camps. However, the problem for the Committee lies with the unknown quantity that is immature '*karelini*'. Consequently, the Committee feels that, for the time being at least, it will try to assign adults to race, but that first-winters are best left as only possibles – the term 'showing the characters of' is imprecise but may be useful.

The following recent records have been assigned to race:

- 1989 Borders Dunglass, adult ♀ *isabellinus*, 13th September.
- 1991 Orkney North Ronaldsay, adult ♂ *isabellinus*, 28th October to 2nd November.
- 1994 Greater London Richmond, ♂ *isabellinus*, 21st March.
- 1994 Shetland Fair Isle, adult ♀ *phoenicuroides*, 23rd–24th August, trapped.
- 1995 Norfolk Snettisham, adult ♂ *phoenicuroides*, 2nd May.
- 1998 Anglesey Cemlyn Bay, ♀ *phoenicuroides*, 2nd July to 8th August.
- 2000 Cambridgeshire Nene Washes, ♀ *isabellinus*, 8th–9th September.
- 2002 Cornwall first-summer ♂ *phoenicuroides*, 26th June.
- 2002 Shetland Fetlar, *isabellinus*, 14th–17th September.
- 2003 Somerset Porlock Marsh, ♂ *phoenicuroides*, 3rd June.

The problem with earlier records is that the descriptions often lack the critical detail needed to help with racial identification. The three records listed below have previously been tentatively assigned to race, but during the review the Committee felt that these racial attributions are still not completely proven. In the case of the 1960 Fair Isle record, there is a good photograph of the bird in the hand, which should help; although the print has a cyan cast, the shrike appears to be a *phoenicuroides*.

(1950 Fife Isle of May, adult ♂, thought to be *phoenicuroides*, 26th September.)

(1960 Shetland Fair Isle, adult ♂ *phoenicuroides*, 12th–13th May, trapped.)

(1975 Sussex, West Sidlesham, ♂ *isabellinus*, in song, 1st March to 20th April.)

There is some dispute concerning the racial identity of the following record. The Committee is currently reviewing descriptions of this striking individual, which is in general terms described as having pale greyish upperparts and a slight wash of pink or pinkish-buff on the underparts, being most marked on the flanks. This may be an example of adult male *karelini*. The possibility of it being influenced by Red-backed Shrike genes has also been suggested. The fact that the racial identity of such a well-marked individual remains in doubt provides a vivid illustration of the problems faced.

1982 Lincolnshire Anderby Creek, adult ♂, 7th–8th November; presumed same, Gibraltar Point, 15th.

The two following birds were previously assigned to a particular form and published as such, but these racial attributions are now considered unsafe:

Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

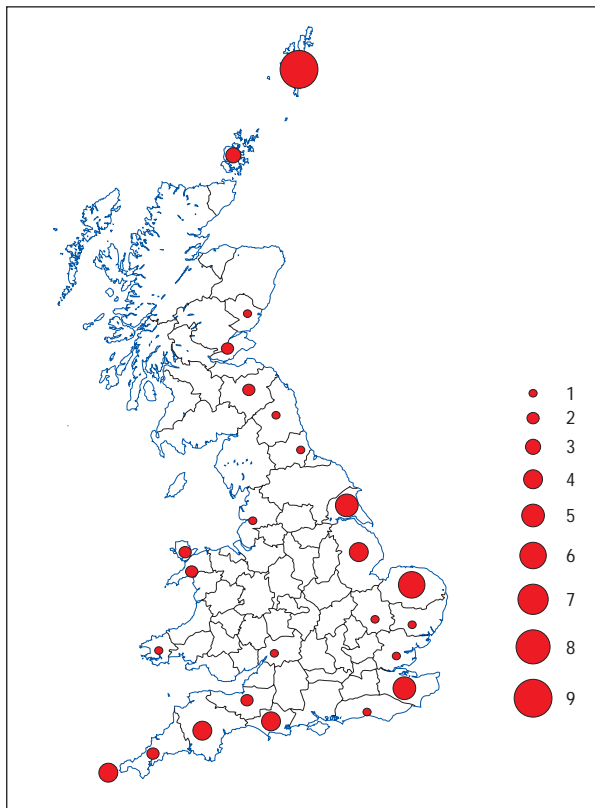


Fig. 3. Accepted records of Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* in Britain, 1950–2005.

**1975 Norfolk Holkham**, 12th–13th October.

**1990 Lincolnshire Donna Nook**, first-winter, 14th–15th October.

The following two records were previously published with incorrect age attributions:

**1959 Dorset Portland Bill**, 10th September; published previously as first-winter, should read adult ♀.

**1985 Dorset Portland Bill**, 15th–23rd September; published previously as first-winter, should read adult ♀.

The following records were previously published with age attributions, but are now considered not safe to be aged conclusively:

**1979 Shetland Fair Isle**, 24th October.

**1985 Anglesey Holyhead**, 25th October.

**1988 Essex Bradwell**, 23rd–28th October.

**1988 Norfolk Horsey Gap**, 26th October.

**1991 Kent North Foreland**, 28th October.

**1995 Pembrokeshire St David's**, 27th October.

The following records were previously published with no age attributions:

**1978 Dorset Winspit**, 14th–24th October; should read first-winter.

**1978 Scilly St Agnes**, 26th–27th October, same, Gugh 28th October; should read first-winter.

**1991 Scilly St Mary's**, 12th October; should read first-winter.

(Four races breed C Asia, from Caspian Sea and W Iran through Kazakhstan to Tajikistan, Afghanistan and N Pakistan to S Mongolia and NW China, with isolated population from Zaidam depression to N Tibetan Plateau. Winters in NE and E Africa, S Arabian Peninsula, S Iran and NW Indian subcontinent.)

### Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (22, 148, 2)

**Yorkshire, East Spurn**, first-winter, 2nd September, photo (S. D. Waite *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 354); age uncertain, 24th–30th September, trapped, photo (P. Collins, S. & P. Jones, B. Winspear).

(European range centred E of Balkans to E Poland, with small numbers W through N Mediterranean to S France and NE Spain. To E, breeds locally from Black Sea coasts, across S Russia and Kazakhstan to extreme NW China and SW Siberia. Migrates through E Africa to winter in S Africa, from Namibia to S Mozambique and N South Africa.)

### Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

#### W Mediterranean islands race *L. s. badius* (0, 4, 1)

**Avon Uphill, Weston-super-Mare**, first-summer, 11th–13th June, photo (P. Bowyer, N. Workman *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 230; plate 34).

**1980 Suffolk Sizewell**, 15th–18th June (J. T. Belsey, C. Towe, T. J. Urbanowicz *et al.*).

The Avon record provided the first chance for many to catch up with the west Mediterranean race *badius* in Britain, and it was certainly one of the main attractions in June 2005, which is clearly the month to look for them. The 1980 Suffolk record is now the first for Britain, and came to light after

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

the article outlining the identification criteria and request for more submissions (Small & Walbridge 2005). At the time, it was well twitched, but how many that saw it realised the significance of the lack of a primary-patch? Although it was depicted in a published drawing as showing a white primary-patch, the photographs show a stunning male *badius* lacking a primary-patch, with a narrow black forehead, pure white underparts, no pale fringes on the coverts, and a faded-looking rufous crown.



Paul Bowyer

34. First-summer 'Balearic Woodchat Shrike' *Lanius senator badius*, Uphill, Weston-super-Mare, June 2005.

Small, B. J., & Walbridge, G. 2005. From the Rarities Committee's files: A review of the identification of 'Balearic' Woodchat Shrike, and details of three British records. *Brit. Birds* 98: 32–42.

(Restricted to islands in W Mediterranean, including Balearics, Corsica and Sardinia, E to Elba and Capraia. Migrates to W Africa, from Ivory Coast to N Cameroon.)

### Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* (0, 101, 2)

Devon Lundy, 29th–30th September, photo (T. Davis, T. Jones *et al.*).

Silly St Mary's, 3rd–4th October, photo (R. Addison, I. T. Barnard *et al.*).

Just two records in 2005, from typical locations and on predictable dates. The Devon record constitutes the seventh for Lundy, with East Prawle (two) and Dawlish Warren (one) accounting for the other three county records since 1949. Although 2005 was a lean year, it is now six years since the last blank year (1999). This is still the most numerous Nearctic passerine and, away from the southwest, it has been recorded in seven east-coast counties from Kent north to Lothian. It can be only a matter of time before one turns up in such a well-watched county as Norfolk; the lack of any Shetland records is also surprising. Elsewhere, 'northern' records have included one in the Western Isles, as well as 18 records from Iceland (<http://www.hi.is/~yannk/index-eng.html>).

(Breeds throughout S Canada, and USA E of Rocky Mountains. Migrates throughout E USA to winter in N South America. Other races resident in South America.)

### Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* (23, 803, 2)

Shetland Fair Isle, *C. h. exilipes*, first-winter ♂, 20th October, photo (P. A. A. Baxter, A. J. Bull, D. N. Shaw *et al.*).

Suffolk Icklingham, *C. h. exilipes*, 31st December to at least 5th February 2006, photo (L. V. Gregory, T. Humpage *et al.*).

1985 Yorkshire, North Heslington, York, *C. h. exilipes*, 28th–30th January, photo (R. D. Gregory, R. S. Slack).

2004 Argyll Tiree, 23rd October (J. Bowler).

2004 Norfolk Titchwell, *C. h. exilipes*, 10th December to 4th April 2005 (per G. E. Dunmore).

2004 Outer Hebrides Eoligarry, Barra, *C. h. hornemanni*, 7th June, photo (D. Pentelow, J. Poyner *et al.*).

2004 Shetland Mid Yell, Yell, 15th October, photo (B. H. Thomason). Uyeasound, Unst, *C. h. hornemanni*, 15th October (B. H. Thomason).

Nominate *hornemanni* of the highest tundra in Canada and Greenland was described by Holboell in 1843; the smaller, almost circumpolar but generally more southerly *exilipes* was recognised in Canada by Coues in 1862. Whether or not their speciation is complete has been much disputed. Indeed if any

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

group of passerines presents frequently unstable gene flow, it has to be the redpolls. Given their status as mere samplers of the birds' farthest-flung eruptions and vagrancies, British observers should remain aware of the difficulties of making firm separations not just of the two forms of Arctic but also of the variable 'northwestern' birds that cross the North Atlantic from Greenland, Iceland and potentially the Nearctic. For more information on the complexities of tundra and fringe-taiga Redpolls, the recent flurry of papers are worth reading, including Riddington & Votier (1997), Reid & Riddington (1998), Votier *et al.* (2000), Pennington & Maher (2005) and Stevenson (2005). The last is a particularly fascinating and overt statement from the Outer Hebrides Recorder. It poses more questions than it finds answers, noting that there and in 'the Northern Isles... birds resembling all known forms can – and do – occur' and may even breed there. It comes as a surprise that the recent (2000–04) rejection rate for the species has been only 10%.

'Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll' *C. h. hornemanni*

The first British record came from Whitburn, Co. Durham, on 24th April 1855. At least ten more were obtained or seen between 1883 and 1935, including nine shot in Shetland, on Fair Isle and Unst, on dates from 18th September to 12th November, and a second English bird near Spurn, East Yorkshire, on 25th February 1893. During the five and a half decades of BBRC reviews, long-held worries over the separation of the species from Mealy Redpoll *C. flammea* led to few and seemingly haphazard racial attributions. Indeed, after one on Fair Isle in 1950, the only other mentions of *hornemanni* until 1996 concerned a dead bird on Lewis on 8th April 1962, four in Kent and Norfolk in October 1972, one in Scilly in October 1977, two on Shetland in October 1980, one on Shetland in April 1987 and one on Orkney in November 1988, a total of only seven records featuring ten birds. Since 1996, attributions have been confirmed in four years; with a marked influx of at least ten in 2003 and another five in 2004, *hornemanni* has actually outnumbered definite *exilipes* by 17 to 8. Its recent localities and dates reflect strongly the occurrence pattern indicated by the early specimens, that of an irregular transatlantic waif usually appearing in the Northern Isles ahead of *exilipes* and only rarely then pitching down the east coast. Hornemann's Arctic Redpoll will continue to be vetted as a rarity.

'Coue's Arctic Redpoll' *C. h. exilipes*

The first three British specimens were taken near Spurn in January 1894 and December 1898 (two), while the first Scottish bird came from Fair Isle in the autumn of 1900. The next eight came from the same areas and also from Norfolk and were dated from 22nd October to 4th January, in only five years from 1910 to 1945. For most of the BBRC epoch, definite records virtually evaporated, a trapped individual from Suffolk in November 1972 being the only bird listed by Naylor (1996) in the years up to 1993. In 1976, however, Sharrock & Sharrock opined that the predominant east-coast locations of the 35 Arctic Redpolls from 1958 to 1972 meant that 'most (modern) birds originated from northern Eurasia', a view supported by the frequent co-arrivals of Mealy Redpolls. Confident attributions to *exilipes* were made on Fair Isle in January and twice in May in 1993. Two autumns later a floodgate opened and along with thousands of Meales, 431, later increased to 441, poured across the North Sea and into Britain (Riddington *et al.* 2000). No-one doubted that they were *exilipes*, since within north-west Europe, literally millions of redpolls erupted southwest in the autumn/winter of 1995/96. Curiously, since 1996, only eight definite attributions have been made. How many others were overlooked in the nine other 'great immigrations' of Meales that occurred between 1829 and 1910 (*The Handbook*; Evans 1991) will never be known. Thus the British status of *exilipes* remains difficult to define; in most years, it may well be rarer than *hornemanni*.

An analysis of the indeterminate birds is pointless but, whichever race is involved, the Arctic Redpoll is always a delight. As Eagle Clarke wrote, particularly of *hornemanni*, 'In life these birds, especially the adults, appear to be almost entirely white and this fact, and their habit of puffing out their fluffy feathers, rendered them exceedingly pretty and conspicuous objects.' Like Brahms on occasion, the lethal collectors could emote.

South of its breeding limits in Europe, the Arctic Redpoll is again a bird of chance but *hornemanni* has reached Iceland, Heligoland, Sweden, The Netherlands, Belgium and France, while *exilipes* also strays through such maritime countries (notably The Netherlands) and reaches more frequently central and eastern Europe (notably Poland).

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

- Pennington, M., & Maher, M. 2005. Greenland, Iceland and Hornemann's Redpolls in Britain. *Birding World* 18: 66–78.
- Reid, J. M., & Riddington, R. 1998. Identification of Greenland and Iceland Redpolls. *Dutch Birding* 20: 261–269.
- Riddington, R., & Votier, S. 1997. Redpolls from Greenland and Iceland. *Birding World* 10: 147–149.
- , — & Steele, J. 2000. The influx of redpolls into Western Europe, 1995/96. *Brit. Birds* 93: 59–67.
- Stevenson, A. 2005. Redpolls in the Outer Hebrides. *Birding World* 18: 124.
- Votier, S. C., Steele, J., Shaw, K. D., & Stoddart, A. M. 2000. Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni exilipes*: an identification review based on the 1995/96 influx. *Brit. Birds* 93: 68–84.

(Circumpolar Arctic, with European breeding range restricted to N Scandinavia. Race *C. h. exilipes* breeds on tundra of Arctic Eurasia, Alaska and Canada to Hudson Bay. Nominate race breeds Ellesmere and Baffin Island to N Greenland. Both races disperse S in winter, irregularly reaching NW Europe.)

### Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* (114, 112, 0)

2002 Shetland Vidlin, Mainland, ♂, 13th–19th July (M. S. Chapman *et al.*).

(Local resident within larch *Larix* sp. forests of N Eurasia from N Russia to E Siberia, reaching Sea of Okhotsk, and S to Baikal region. Irruptive dispersal leads to irregular breeding in Finland, and very occasionally in Sweden and Norway. Outside breeding season, dispersal occasionally reaches NW Europe. Nominate form breeds across N North America.)

### Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* (0, 7, 4)

Kent Tankerton, Whitstable, ♂, 24th–25th May (G. J. A. Burton *et al.*). North Foreland, ♂, 9th June (F. Solly). Dungeness, ♂, 11th–13th June, photo (S. Davies *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 232).

Suffolk Landguard Point, first-summer ♂, 21st–26th May, photo (L. G. Woods *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 231; plate 35).

The Trumpeter Finch occupies an extensive range stretching from the Canary Islands through North Africa to southwest Asia, Pakistan and the extreme western deserts of India. The species inhabits the most desolate arid ravines, rocky slopes and stony uplands, though generally avoids extensive sand-dune habitat. Four races include the nominate *githagineus* from Egypt south to Sudan, *amantum* in the Canary Islands, *crassirostris* from Sinai and the Levant east (sporadically) through Arabia to southwest Asia, and *zedlitsi* in northwest Africa and, recently, southern Spain. All are generally regarded as resident but dispersive or nomadic, undergoing erratic movements which lead to small-scale changes of range, and sometimes local abundance in new areas one year, followed by complete absence in the next. The race *crassirostris* perhaps tolerates the most extreme climatic conditions, yet there is little evidence of large-scale movement or range extension, though some populations in Iran and



Chris Galvin

35. First-summer male Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus*, Landguard Point, Suffolk, May 2005.



## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

Afghanistan are partial migrants, making local movements in winter to foothills and adjacent plains. Closer to home, *zedlitsi* has shown recent northward movement, becoming a breeding resident in Spain in 1971; perhaps it is no coincidence that that was also the year of the first two British records. The colonisation of Spain appears to be a recent event but it is possible that the species may have been previously overlooked in Spain's harsh terrain. Finlayson & Tomlinson (2003) reported that the Spanish birds return to North Africa in winter, but other reports suggest that the species is chiefly resident in Spain.

There appears to be no reason to suspect other than that *zedlitsi* is involved in British records. Since the species as a whole is erratically nomadic, the British experience of occasional clusters of records appears normal. In Europe as a whole there was a small-scale invasion in spring 2005; the collective number and timing of records surely dispel any notion that anything other than natural vagrancy is concerned. As well as the four British records between 21st May and 13th June, there was an unprecedented arrival of six birds to France (only four previous records) between 23rd April and 15th May; the fourth and fifth records for Sweden were found on 28th May; and a single at the mouth of the Besós River near Barcelona, Spain, on 29th April was well north of its usual range. In addition, the first for Switzerland was a male on 27th–29th April, and there were additional April records in Italy and Cyprus.

This year's British records, the first since 1992 and the first twitchable birds since the one at Church Norton in 1984, all involved males, as established by the bright red tones of their bills; the bill colour of females during the breeding season is pale brown to dull horn, often with a pink or yellow tinge. Ageing is more difficult, although the subdued pinkness in general and the lack of obvious grey tones to the head suggest that none was an adult male. Ageing is hampered by variation in the timing and extent of the post-juvenile moult. Most juveniles undergo a partial post-juvenile moult including head and body and some wing-coverts; however, some retain their juvenile primaries until the summer of their second calendar-year, while others renew the central and outer primaries, and a small proportion of birds undergo a complete moult. Whatever the reasons, the photographs do show individual differences among the four birds. The plumage of the Landguard bird was generally the dullest, this individual having the least worn tertials, and the pink largely restricted to the rump, with just a little on the wings and coverts. Both the Dungeness and Whitstable birds were brighter and more clearly pink, yet both of these had heavily worn tertials.

Finlayson, C., & Tomlinson, D. 2003. *Birds of Iberia*. Santana, Malaga.

(Largely resident from Canary Islands, SE Spain and deserts of N Africa east through Middle East to S Iran and Pakistan. Eastern populations in particular dispersive, some wintering east to deserts of NW India.)

### Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia* (0, 4, 1)



Hugh Harrop

**Shetland** Garths Ness, Mainland, first-winter ♂, 15th–17th September, photo (R. M. Mellor *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 409; plate 36).

(Widespread breeder across North America from NW Alaska E to Newfoundland, S through Mexico and C America to N Peru and Galapagos. Northern populations migratory, wintering C Mexico to C Peru and N Brazil.)

**36.** First-winter male Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia*, Garths Ness, Shetland, September 2005.

Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005



Steve Young/Birdwatch

37. First-winter Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2005.

**Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* (0, 33, 3)**

**Highland** Glasnakille, Skye, first-winter, 4th October (R. D. Day, R. Macmillan).

**Outer Hebrides** Loch Druidibeg, South Uist, first-winter, 29th September (A. Stevenson *et al.*).

**Scilly** St Agnes, first-winter, 27th–30th September, photo (D. Page, D. Price *et al.*); same, St Mary's, 3rd October to 3rd November (per N. Hudson) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 410; plate 37).

(Breeds widely across North America from W Alaska E through Canada to Newfoundland, S to Maine in NE USA. Migrates widely through E USA to winter in South America from Panama to Chile and E Argentina.)

**Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* (2, 42, 3)**

**Outer Hebrides** Carinish, North Uist, ♀, 16th November (S. E. Duffield, B. Rabbitts).

**Shetland** Challister, Whalsay, first-winter, ♂, 4th–5th November, photo (J. L. Irvine *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 99: plate 28; plate 38).

**Worcestershire** New Farm, ♂, 15th–24th January, photo (G. Peplow *et al.*).

**2004 Yorkshire, North**  
**Bempton**, ♂, 10th–11th April  
(per *Birdwatch* magazine).

(Breeds temperate Russia from W Urals to upper Kolyma River, S to S Siberia, Mongolia, lower Amur valley and Sakhalin. Isolated population breeds Qinghai and Gansu, C China. Small, isolated wintering populations regular W Italy and C Israel. Otherwise winters S of breeding range from Turkestan E through Himalayan foothills to C and E China, N of Yangtze.)



Hugh Harrop

38. First-winter male Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos*, Challister, Whalsay, Shetland, November 2005.

### Chestnut-eared Bunting *Emberiza fucata* (0, 1, 0)

**2004 Shetland** Fair Isle, first-winter ♂, 15th–20th October, photo (D. N. Shaw *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 97: plate 399).

Few birders would have imagined that Chestnut-eared Bunting would reach western Europe, and even D. I. M. Wallace's summary of predicted future Palearctic passerine vagrants (*Brit. Birds* 73: 388–397), which has proved to be remarkably intuitive, did not include this species. Fortunately, it was trapped, identified as being of the nominate form, which is only known to breed to the east of Lake Baikal, and aged as a first-winter. Its credentials were further enhanced by a strong supporting cast, which included a Rufous-tailed Robin *Luscinia sibilans* on Fair Isle on 23rd October, and an Eastern Crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus coronatus* in Finland, also on 23rd. During its review of this remarkable record, BOURC considered the likelihood of it being an escape from captivity. They concluded that there was no known trade in captive birds at this time, and since the legitimate trade in wild birds from eastern Asia had then effectively dried up owing to protection measures set up in response to the outbreak of avian influenza in 2004, this would seem to rule out the possibility of it being an escape. An account of this remarkable bird will be published in *British Birds* in 2007.

(Nominate form breeds Baikal region, E to NE Mongolia and Russian Maritime Regions, NE China, Korean Peninsula and Japan. Northern populations migratory, wintering Taiwan and S China, south to N Thailand. Other races largely sedentary in W Himalayas and SE China.)

### Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* (21, 424, 6)

**Angus & Dundee** Windy hills, ♂, 28th–29th May, photo (R. A. Bramhall *et al.*).

**Shetland** Fair Isle, ♂, 8th May (J. M. Reid *et al.*); ♂, 13th June (M. D. Warren *et al.*). Baltasound, Unst, ♂, 22nd May (D. P. Hall, S. J. Minton, M. G. Pennington) (*Brit. Birds* 98: plate 233). Hoswick, Mainland, 24th–27th October, photo (W. F. & W. R. H. Peplow *et al.*) (plate 39).

**Yorkshire, East Spurn**, 15th–18th October, photo (I. D. Collins, R. J. Swales *et al.*).

First described by Pallas from Transbaikalia in 1776, this handsome bunting is still a much-prized tick. Its early British history began in the trappers' era and was boosted by the island collectors. Of 26 birds noted up to 1936 (*The Handbook*; Naylor 1996), only 17 survived later reviews but the first remained the bird trapped near Brighton, Sussex, on 23rd October 1867. The other 16 included a surprising male and female in Aberdeenshire in March 1905 and, in a remarkable forecast of its future main status, three in May and June, seven in September, four in October and one in November. Owing to the



Hugh Harrop

39. Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*, Hoswick, Shetland, October 2005.

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

Second World War and its aftermath, there were only two more before 1949. Up to then, the sympatric Little Bunting *E. pusilla* had outnumbered Rustic almost four to one but both remained unknown in Wales and the southwest.

As the observatories grew in number, Rustic Buntings were found more regularly but given a small flood of Littles, they became outnumbered five to one. Both species reached Wales and Devon and Little also Scilly. By 1972, Sharrock & Sharrock (1976) were able to display annual records from 1962 but noted a definite decline in spite of mounting reports in Scilly and the first for Ireland. Similarly the trend in numbers of Littles stopped rising and they remained concentrated in Shetland. The ratio changed abruptly to less than two to one in favour of Little, and the latter became rare in spring.

In the next 13 years to 1985, and particularly from the mid 1970s, both Rustic and Little were found more frequently and the latter broke all previous bounds in 1984 when there were 41. Once again the ratio changed to over three to one in favour of Little. The relative numbers of the two species became really puzzling: although Little was colonising Norway and Sweden, its measured presence in Fennoscandia was no more than 1,300 pairs in 1988, by which year that region's Rustics numbered over 550,000 pairs after a dramatic expansion since 1897. From 1970, they had begun to breed in Norway, as near to Fair Isle as London is!

Looking in detail at the records of the two species for the last eight years of common BBRC review, from 1986 to 1993, it is clear that the dynamics behind their British occurrences are different. Rustic was far commoner in spring overshoots (43 cf. 22 Littles) and was found later (20% in June); it was far less numerous in autumn (73 cf. 203) with only one matching marked influx and had only just started to overwinter (from 1992 cf. from 1949). The overall ratio returned to two Littles to one Rustic but was still wildly out of kilter with the balance of their close breeding populations. In 1993, more Rustics were found than Littles for the first time ever (49 cf. 44). There was another surge in 1998, but whereas Littles became even more numerous into the 2000s, Rustics faltered and have averaged only six birds a year since 2002. Even though the population of Rustics in Fennoscandia has stopped growing or decreased – later estimates put it at around 300,000 pairs – it still outnumbers Little Bunting there by 40 to one.

A comparison of occurrence frequency between Rustic and Yellow-breasted Bunting *E. aureola* is even more perplexing. With now fewer than 100 pairs in its Finnish outpost (Laine 1996), the latter as a short-range 'reversed migrant' ought to be an absolute rarity. Yet, over its entire British history, one has appeared for every two Rustics. Like Greenish Warbler *P. trochiloides viridanus*, Yellow-breasted is a classic member of late August and September drifts to the Northern Isles and the east coast. Not for the first time this reviewer senses that it is to northwest Russia that we should look for the main source of these species and the Rustic Bunting.

Elsewhere in the Western Palearctic, Rustic Bunting has been found in 28 other countries. Its most extreme occurrences have come from Spitzbergen, Iceland, Iberia, Malta and through the Balkans to the Levant. Its overall reach is seven countries more than the Yellow-breasted but four less than the Little (*BWP*).

Although confusion with Little and Reed Buntings *E. schoeniclus* has occurred in autumn, field identification of Rustic Bunting is not difficult and is well covered in the latest guides. The recent (2000–04) rejection rate has been 5%. Vinicombe & Cottridge (1996) gave the bird a complex status, combining westward overshoots of Fennoscandian birds in late spring, 'reversed migration' in autumn, hidden wintering and withdrawal from such in early spring. With its twentieth-century expansion now stalled, will it maintain this occurrence pattern? And, if it is a typical 'reversed migrant', why is it so uncommon compared with Little and Yellow-breasted? Perhaps, like the similarly abundant Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*, most do know where to go in winter.

Laine, L. J. 1996. *Suomalainen Lintu-opas*. Helsinki Media, Helsinki.

(Breeds in boreal forest mires of N Eurasia from Sweden and Finland, E across N Russia to easternmost Siberia and Kamchatka, and S to Baikal region. Migrates SE to winter in E China, Korean Peninsula and S Japan.)

### Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* (8, 219, 1)

**Shetland** Foula, first-winter, 27th September (P. R. French, A. R. Mainwood *et al.*).

(European range restricted to small and declining population in C Finland, centred on Gulf of Bothnia. To E, breeds widely across Russia and Siberia to Kamchatka, S to NE China and NE Hokkaido. Winters locally from E Nepal through Himalayan foothills to NE India, and widely throughout SE Asia.)

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

**Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala* (7, 170, 1)

Argyll Kiloran, Colonsay, ♂, 12th June (M. Davison, D. C. Jardine *et al.*).

1998 Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 27th–28th September (M. Gray *et al.*).

2001 Shetland Fair Isle, ♀, 22nd September (J. K. Andrews, P. R. French, D. N. Shaw *et al.*).

(Breeds from C Italy to Greece, Turkey, N Iraq and W Iran, N through Caucasus to Ukraine and S Russia. Winters in W and C India.)

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak** *Pheucticus ludovicianus* (0, 20, 1)

Outer Hebrides Ardmhor plantation, Barra, first-winter ♂, 8th October (K. Gillon *et al.*).

Yet another reward for the pioneering birders of Barra. This was only the second Scottish record, following a first-winter male at Newton, North Uist, on 7th–8th October 1983, which died in care on the last date. Scilly accounts for the majority of the British records and, surprisingly, there are still no records from Cornwall or Shetland (and there is only one accepted record for Iceland). Surely it will not be long before a ringer in Cornwall has the pleasure of finding out how much pain this species can inflict on one finger!

(Breeds C Canada to Nova Scotia and through mid-west and NE USA to Maryland. Migrates through E USA to winter from C Mexico through C America to N South America.)

**Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (0, 25, 1)

Shetland Foula, 30th September to 4th October, photo (K. B. Shepherd, N. D. & P. J. Wright, R. D. Wynn *et al.*).

Another good find from Foula. A typical date and although most records are in the southwest, this is the fifth for Shetland.

(Breeds widely across S Canada and N USA, S to NE California and New Jersey. Winters Peru to S Brazil and N Argentina.)

**Appendix 1. List of records not accepted**

This list contains all current records not accepted after circulation to the Committee. It does not include a) those withdrawn by the observer(s) after discussion with the Hon. Secretary; b) those which, even if circulated, were not attributed by the observer(s) to any definite species; c) those mentioned in 'Recent reports' in *British Birds* if full details were unobtainable; or d) certain escapes.

In the vast majority of cases, the record was not accepted because we were not convinced that the identification was fully established; only in a very few cases were we satisfied that a mistake had been made.

2005 **Black Brant** Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, 5th February. **Redhead** Kenfig, Glamorgan, 24th September. **Ferruginous Duck** Blithfield Reservoir, Staffordshire, 24th and 25th March. **White-billed Diver** Cummingston, Moray & Nairn, 3rd May. **Zino's/Fea's Petrel** Atwick, East Yorkshire, 20th July; Filey, North Yorkshire, 20th July; Sheringham, Norfolk, 8th August; Filey, North Yorkshire, 11th August. **Cape Verde Shearwater** *Calonectris edwardsii* Rumps Point, Cornwall, 3rd June. **North Atlantic Little Shearwater** Fife Ness, Fife, 7th September; Rumps Point, Cornwall, 28th September. **Wilson's Storm-petrel** 10 km W of St Mary's, Scilly, 17th August. **Frigatebird sp.** Peterhead, Northeast Scotland, 26th November. **Squacco Heron** Peppermill Dam, Fife, 24th May. **Great White Egret** Hayling Oysterbeds, Hampshire, 10th May; Taw Estuary, Devon, 26th May; Dolgellau, Merionethshire, 28th May; Erme Estuary, Devon, 8th June. **Black Stork** Lindfield, Sussex, 14th June. **Black Kite** Otter Estuary, Devon, 21st January; Yarpole, Herefordshire, 1st April; Trundigar, Orkney, 29th April; Shelley, West Yorkshire, 2nd May; Bishop Monkton Ings, North Yorkshire, 8th May; Stainton, South Yorkshire, 14th May; Leiston, Suffolk, 16th May; Fiddler's Ferry, Cheshire, 21st May; Murcar, Northeast Scotland, 27th May; Galmpton, Devon, 31st May; Frensham Common, Surrey, 2nd June; Longwood Warren, Hampshire, 17th June; Low Barden Reservoir, North Yorkshire, 21st June; Strete, Devon, 28th June; Hatfield, Hertfordshire, 7th September. **Pallid Harrier** Strathnairn, Highland, 8th May; Fellgate, Durham, 28th May. **Red-footed Falcon** Shipley, West Sussex, 29th January; Storrington, West Sussex, 9th May; Fraishorpe, East Yorkshire, 22nd May; Minsmere, Suffolk, 4th June; Abberton Reservoir, Essex, 20th

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

August. **Sora** Brogborough Lake, Bedfordshire, 4th January. **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyryula alleni* St Mary's, Scilly, 17th October. **Collared Pratincole** Llanfaelog, Anglesey, 29th June. **American Golden Plover** Porthgwarra, Cornwall, 27th October. **Least Sandpiper** Keyhaven, Hampshire, 9th September. **White-rumped Sandpiper** Thurlestone, Devon, 5th September; Southwold, Suffolk, 28th October. **Baird's Sandpiper** Goldcliff, Gwent, 6th September; Spurn, East Yorkshire, 11th September. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** Titchwell, Norfolk, 19th July. **Long-billed Dowitcher** Goldcliff, Gwent, 20th–27th March; Skinburness, Cumbria, 22nd September. **Marsh Sandpiper** Swalecliffe, Kent, 30th April; Abbotts Hall, Essex, 25th September. **Great Black-headed Gull** *Larus ichthyaetus* Cemlyn Bay, Anglesey, 18th July. **Laughing Gull** Fishguard Harbour, Pembrokeshire, 21st November; Ayr, Ayrshire, 19th December. **Bonaparte's Gull** Caswell Bay, Gower, 7th February; Weybourne, Norfolk, 16th November. **Audouin's Gull** Blakeney Point, Norfolk, 25th May; St Ouen's, Jersey, 31st May. **Ross's Gull** Hunstanton, Norfolk, 19th October. **Gull-billed Tern** Abbotsbury, Dorset, 7th June; Whitburn, Co. Durham, 27th June; Cotswold Water Park, Gloucestershire, 3rd July. **Caspian Tern** Hook-with-Warsash, Hampshire, 27th June. **White-winged Black Tern** Stanford Reservoir, Leicestershire, 27th August. **Eurasian Scops Owl** *Otus scops* Hythe, Kent, 15th July. **Snowy Owl** Loch Thormaid, Caithness, 10th March. **Alpine Swift** Llandudno, Caernarfonshire, 24th March; Pentire Head, Cornwall, 27th March; Maldon, Essex, 11th October. **Pallid Swift** St Martin's, Scilly, 28th October; Littlehampton, Sussex, 30th October; Newquay, Cornwall, 30th October; Cley, Norfolk, 31st October. **Little Swift** Hythe, Kent, 14th July. **Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* Frensham Great Pond, Surrey, 19th May. **Red-rumped Swallow** Netherfield, Nottinghamshire, 19th June. **Olive-backed Pipit** Fair Isle, Shetland, 16th October; Fair Isle, 3rd November. **Red-throated Pipit** Greenabella Marsh, Cleveland, 1st October; Barnes, Greater London, 10th October; Sandy Point, Hampshire, 13th October. **Citrine Wagtail** Farne Islands, Northumberland, 10th September; Cley, Norfolk, 13th September. **Thrush Nightingale** Monteviot, Borders, 7th May. **Red-flanked Bluetail** Girton, Cambridgeshire, 26th June. **Dusky Thrush** *Turdus naumanni* Dalbeattie, Dumfries & Galloway, 17th October. **Dark-throated Thrush** Southwell, Dorset, 20th October; Great Broughton, Cumbria, 21st November. **American Robin** St Mary's, Scilly, 18th October. **Blyth's Reed Warbler** St Agnes, Scilly, 11th October. **Subalpine Warbler** St Mary's, Scilly, 19th October. **Sardinian Warbler** Farlington Marshes, Hampshire, 17th June. **Greenish Warbler** Cotswold Water Park, Gloucestershire, 2nd September; Stiffkey, Norfolk, 12th September. **Arctic Warbler** St Agnes, Scilly, 8th September. **Hume's Warbler** Weybourne, Norfolk, 11th December. **Dusky Warbler** Lannacombe, Devon, 15th October. **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* Amlwch, Anglesey, 1st October. **Parrot Crossbill** *Loxia pytyopsittacus* Swining, Mainland, Shetland, 19th October.

**2004 Wilson's Storm-petrel** Workington, Cumbria, 18th and 21st September. **Great White Egret** St Mary's Marshes, Kent, 10th July; Rock, Cornwall, 11th July; Allhallows, Kent, 12th October; St Mary's Marshes, Kent, 15th November. **Black Brant** Reculver, Kent, 16th March. **Redhead** Uskmouth, Gwent, 2nd May. **Ferruginous Duck** Hen Reedbeds, Suffolk, 2nd August. **Black Kite** Orcombe Point, Devon, 5th September. **Red-footed Falcon** Hintlesham, Suffolk, 22nd August. **American Coot** St Agnes, Scilly, 30th November. **White-winged Black Tern** Priory Country Park, Bedfordshire, 2nd May; Titchfield Haven, Hampshire, 26th September. **Pallid Swift** Bawdsey, Suffolk, 21st October; Chapel Point, Lincolnshire, 24th October; Hunstanton, Norfolk, 29th October; Spurn, East Yorkshire, 29th October; Bishopstone, Kent, 30th October. **Little Swift** Southampton, Hampshire, 6th February. **Tree Swallow** *Tachycineta bicolor* Wick Hams, Dorset, 31st October. **Red-rumped Swallow** Hensol Lake, Glamorgan, 30th April; Coll, Argyll, 4th May. **Asian Desert Warbler** *Sylvia nana* California, Norfolk, 22nd October. **Greenish Warbler** Beachy Head, West Sussex, 14th June. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** Spey Bay, Moray & Nairn, 20th September 2004.

**2003 Ferruginous Duck** Abbotsbury, Dorset, 1st and 11th December. **Great White Egret** Fiddler's Ferry, Cheshire, 13th September; Malltraeth, Anglesey, 6th November. **Black Kite** Windmill Farm, Cornwall, 11th July. **Red-rumped Swallow** Meece Brook, Staffordshire, 30th April.

**2001 Black Kite** South Woodford, Greater London, 9th June. **Alpine Swift** Charmouth, Dorset, 18th February.

## Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2005

1994 **White-winged Black Tern** Rutland Water, Leicestershire, 14th October.

1992 **Red-throated Pipit** Swalecliffe, Kent, 29th September.

1991 **Snowy Owl** Breydon Water, Norfolk, 22nd March.

1990 **Black Scoter** Farnham Gravel-pit, North Yorkshire, 28th April. **Two-barred Crossbill** Sandringham, Norfolk, 30th September.

1987 **Spotted Eagle** *Aquila clanga* Braco, Perth & Kinross, 6th July.

1975 **Pechora Pipit** Minsmere, Suffolk, 27th April.

1964 **Upland Sandpiper** Minsmere, Suffolk, 24th September. **Alpine Swift** Whalley, Lancashire, 10th–11th July.

## Appendix 2. List of records not accepted but identification proved

### Ross's Goose *Anser rossii* (0, 8, 0)

2001 **Hampshire** Farlington Marshes, 29th–31st October (R. A. Chapman, J. Crook).

(Breeds in scattered colonies on tundra of Canadian Arctic, from Perry River region of Northwest Territories to N Manitoba, including Southampton Island, E to N Ontario. Most migrate across C USA to wintering grounds in S USA, with increasing numbers regular on Atlantic seaboard, and N Mexico.)

### White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* (0, 19, 0)

**Cleveland** Saltholme, adult ♂, 29th March to 7th April (J. Grieveson *et al.*), returning bird from 2004 (*Brit. Birds* 98: 693).

**Hertfordshire** Hilfield Park Reservoir, 13th, 18th February, 19th March, intermittently 21st August to 4th January 2006; presumed returning bird from 2004 (below).

1999 **Cambridgeshire** Godmanchester, juvenile, 4th September. Correct year is 1999, not 1998 as previously published (*Brit. Birds* 98: 693).

2001 **Oxfordshire** Farmoor Reservoir, ♀, 3rd November, photo (N. J. Hallam *et al.*).

2004 **Hertfordshire** Hilfield Park Reservoir, adult ♂, 12th–30th January, photo (A. E. Blake, S. Murray *et al.*); same, 23rd December to 31st January 2005.

(Fragmented breeding range across steppe region of S Palearctic. Small resident or dispersive European population now confined to SC Spain. More widespread in Asia, from C Turkey, E through C Asian steppes of S Russia to E Kazakhstan and W Xinjiang province, NW China. Asian breeders winter on wetlands to S of breeding range from Israel to Iran and Punjab, Pakistan.)

